

**Saturday afternoon
presentation and PowerPoint
by Angie Petrie on
*The Art of Painted Presence***

The art of painted presence



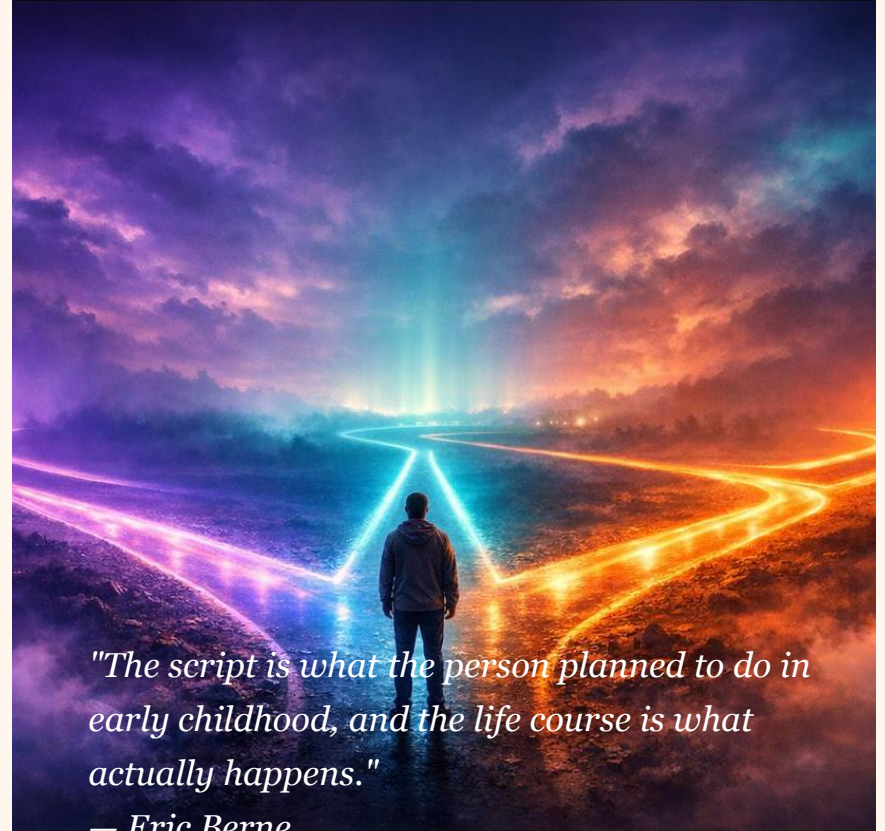
The unconscious messages that shape who we become

What Are Life Scripts?

Eric Berne defined a life script as

"an unconscious life plan made in childhood, reinforced by parents, and justified with subsequent events."

- **Scripts are generally formed before age 7**
- Based on verbal and non-verbal messages from caregivers
- Contain decisions about self, others, and the world
- Operate outside conscious awareness



"The script is what the person planned to do in early childhood, and the life course is what actually happens."

— Eric Berne

How Our Scripts Are Written

1

Messages Received

Verbal and non-verbal cues from parents, caregivers, and environment shape early beliefs

2

Decisions Made

The child's Little Professor interprets messages and makes survival decisions

3

Script Reinforced

Counterscript, games, and selective attention strengthen the original decisions

4

Pattern Replayed

As adults, we unconsciously seek situations that confirm our childhood script

The 12 Injunctions

Injunctions are powerful prohibitions from the Child ego state of parents, given out of their own pain, unhappiness, anxiety, and frustration. They form the basis of our limiting script beliefs.



Don't Exist / Don't Be You

Don't Exist

The most damaging injunction. The child receives the message that their very existence is unwanted or burdensome.

How it's communicated:

"You were an accident" • "If I didn't have children, I'd have a career" • Physical/emotional neglect or abuse

Adult manifestation:

Self-harm, self-sabotage, feeling invisible, struggling to assert needs, chronic sense of not deserving to take up space.

Don't Be You

Parents who haven't actualised themselves project their unfulfilled dreams onto the child, wanting them to be someone different.

How it's communicated:

"I wish you were more like your sister" • Gender disappointment • Constant comparison to others

Adult manifestation:

Living inauthentically, fear of self-expression, people-pleasing, difficulty knowing who you truly are.

Don't Be a Child / Don't Grow Up

Don't Be a Child

The child is expected to grow up faster than developmentally appropriate. Parentified children carry adult burdens.

How it's communicated:

"Act your age" • "Big boys don't cry" • Being made responsible for younger siblings or a parent's emotions

Adult manifestation:

Difficulty having fun, overly serious, hyper-responsible, uncomfortable with spontaneity or play.

Don't Grow Up

The opposite pole: the child is kept dependent because the parent needs them to stay small and needy.

How it's communicated:

"You'll always be my baby" • Over-protection • Doing everything for the child • Discouraging independence

Adult manifestation:

Helplessness, dependency, difficulty making decisions, fear of autonomy, staying in the parental home.

Don't Make It / Don't

Don't Make It

Success is unconsciously forbidden. The parent may be envious or threatened by the child's potential achievements.

How it's communicated:

"Don't get too big for your boots" • Dismissing achievements • Competing with the child

Adult manifestation:

Self-sabotage near success, imposter syndrome, underachievement, anxiety when things go well.

Don't (Do Anything)

The child is paralysed by an anxious parent who communicates that the world is dangerous and initiative is risky.

How it's communicated:

"Be careful!" • "Let me do that for you" • Catastrophising about minor risks

Adult manifestation:

Procrastination, indecisiveness, seeking constant permission, fear of taking action or making mistakes.

Don't Be Important / Don't Belong

Don't Be Important

The child learns their needs and opinions don't matter.
They are systematically diminished.

How it's communicated:

"Children should be seen and not heard" • Being ignored or talked over • Minimising achievements

Adult manifestation:

Difficulty speaking up, avoiding leadership, downplaying achievements, feeling unworthy of attention.

Don't Belong

The child is made to feel like an outsider in their own family or community.

How it's communicated:

"You're so different from the rest of us" • Exclusion from family activities • Being the scapegoat

Adult manifestation:

Social isolation, feeling like an outsider, difficulty forming group connections, chronic loneliness.

Don't Be Close / Don't Be Well

Don't Be Close

Intimacy and emotional closeness are experienced as dangerous. Trust is broken early.

How it's communicated:

Loss of a parent through death or abandonment • Emotional unavailability • Broken promises repeatedly

Adult manifestation:

Fear of intimacy, pushing people away, superficial relationships, distrust, emotional walls.

Don't Be Well (Don't Be Sane)

The child learns that being unwell is the only way to receive attention or care.

How it's communicated:

Only receiving attention when sick • Parent modelling illness as coping • Being told feelings are 'crazy'

Adult manifestation:

Psychosomatic illness, using illness to avoid, hypochondria, difficulty recognising healthy states.

Don't Think / Don't Feel

Don't Think

The child's cognitive ability is dismissed or belittled.
Independent thought is discouraged.

How it's communicated:

"Don't be so stupid" • "Don't argue with me" • "Don't think what you think, think what I think"

Adult manifestation:

Self-doubt, difficulty making decisions, deferring to others' opinions, second-guessing constantly.

Don't Feel

Certain emotions — or all emotions — are deemed unacceptable. The child learns to suppress their feeling world.

How it's communicated:

"Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about" • "Don't be angry" • Emotions being mocked or punished

Adult manifestation:

Emotional numbness, alexithymia, replacing feelings with thinking, addictions, psychosomatic symptoms.

Pause & Reflect

Consider Your Own Injunctions

Which of the 12 injunctions resonate most strongly with you?

Can you identify specific moments from childhood where these messages were communicated?

How do these injunctions show up in your adult life — in relationships, work, or self-talk?

What decisions did you make as a child in response to these messages?

"The child creates both the injunction and the decision."

— Goulding & Goulding, 1976

The 5 Drivers

Drivers are counterscript behaviours — "I'm OK if..." messages lasting just seconds, yet repeated hundreds of times daily. They are the gateway to our script, the conditions we place on our own OKness.

Be Perfect

I'm OK if I get everything right

Please Others

I'm OK if I make everyone happy

Be Strong

I'm OK if I show no weakness

Try Hard

I'm OK if I keep trying

Hurry Up

I'm OK if I do it fast

BE PERFECT

"I'm OK if I get everything right"

Characteristics

Uses exact, qualified language • Sets impossibly high standards • Checks work obsessively • Neat and well-groomed • Never fully satisfied

Strengths

Produces high-quality work • Thorough preparation • Strong attention to detail • Well-organised and forward-planning

Costs

Procrastination from fear of imperfection • Burnout • Missing deadlines while still checking • Overly critical of self and others

Allower:

"It's OK to be yourself — good enough is enough"

PLEASE OTHERS

"I'm OK if I make you happy"

Characteristics

Seeks approval constantly • Nodding, smiling, using upward inflections • Says 'yes' when meaning 'no' • Prioritises others' needs above own

Strengths

Highly empathic • Creates harmonious environments • Supportive and caring • Excellent at reading others' emotions

Costs

Loss of identity • Resentment from suppressed needs • Burnout from over-giving • Difficulty with assertiveness and boundaries

Allowers:

"It's OK to consider yourself and respect your own needs"

BE STRONG

"I'm OK if I show no weakness"

Characteristics

Stoic demeanour • Rarely asks for help • Flat emotional tone • 'I can handle it' attitude • Keeps feelings private

Strengths

Calm under pressure • Reliable in crises • Independent and self-reliant • Projects confidence and stability

Costs

Emotional disconnection • Loneliness • Physical health problems from bottled stress • Difficulty forming deep bonds

Allower:

"It's OK to be open and express your needs"

Hurry Up / Try Hard

Hurry Up

"I'm OK if I do it fast"

Talks fast, multitasks, fidgets, feels restless when things move slowly. Values speed over quality.

Strengths:

Energetic, productive, meets deadlines

Costs: Anxiety, errors, inability to be present, burnout

Allowers:

"It's OK to take your time"

Try Hard

"I'm OK if I keep trying"

Puts immense effort into everything but values the struggle over the result. Never finishes sentences. Overworks.

Strengths:

Enthusiastic, willing to tackle challenges, persistent

Costs: Never completing tasks, frustration, wasted energy, burnout

Allowers:

"It's OK to just do it — completion matters"

Drivers & Process Scripts

Kahler linked each driver to a process script — a recurring life pattern that plays out over seconds, hours, or decades:

Driver	Process Script	Pattern
Be Perfect	Until	"I can't relax until everything is perfect"
Please Others	After	"Something bad will happen after this good moment"
Be Strong	Always	"I always end up cornered, carrying everything alone"
Try Hard	Never / Almost	"I never quite finish" or "I almost made it"
Hurry Up	Always	"I always feel cornered by time running out"

Key insight: Drivers last just **0.5 to 7 seconds** but are repeated **hundreds of times daily** — shaping entire life trajectories moment by moment.

The Script System

How Injunctions & Drivers Work Together

The injunction is the underlying prohibition:

"Don't exist" — the deep script belief

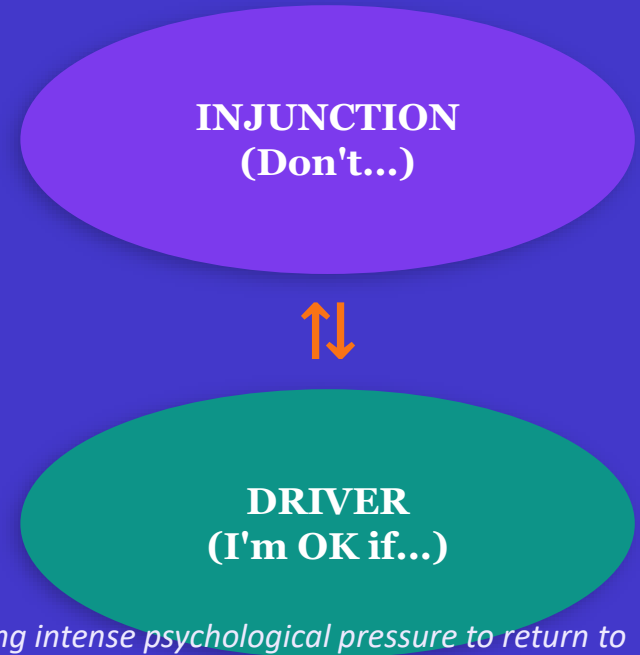
The driver is the counterscript defence:

"I'm OK if I try hard" — the conditional OKness

Together they create a juggling act:

"It's OK for me to exist AS LONG AS I keep trying hard"

When the driver behaviour stops, the injunction becomes exposed — creating intense psychological pressure to return to the driver pattern.



A person is shown from behind, sitting in a meditative lotus position. The background is a dark, starry space filled with various large, faceted gemstones in colors like orange, blue, green, purple, and yellow. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

Pause & Reflect

Explore Your Driver Patterns

Which driver(s) do you recognise most in yourself? When does it activate?

What is the 'I'm OK if...' condition you place on your own worthiness?

How does your primary driver serve you — and where does it limit you?

Can you identify the injunction that sits beneath your driver pattern?

"Stopping the driver behaviour also prevents the concurrent script sentence patterns."

— Kahler, 1975

Permissions & Allowers

The Antidotes to Script

Be Perfect

It's OK to be yourself

You are enough as you are

Please Others

It's OK to consider yourself

Your needs matter equally

Be Strong

It's OK to be open

Vulnerability is strength

Try Hard

It's OK to do it

Completion over effort

Hurry Up

It's OK to take your time

You have enough time

Capers (1974) identified these allowers as antitheses to each driver — healthy permissions that restore unconditional OKness.

Rewriting Your Script

1. Awareness

Identify your script patterns, injunctions, and drivers

2. Understanding

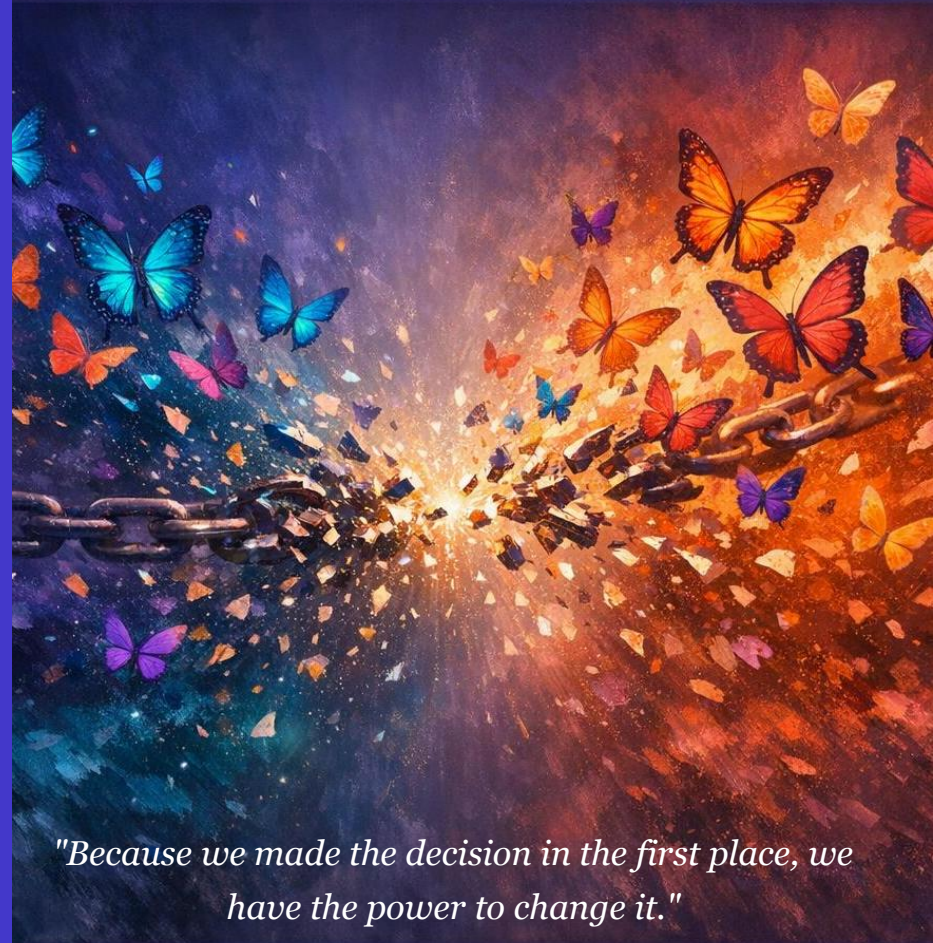
Recognise where these patterns originated and the childhood decisions behind them

3. Redecision

Make new decisions from your Child ego state, integrated with Adult awareness

4. Practice

Replace driver behaviours with allowers. Seek unconditional strokes. Live from autonomy.

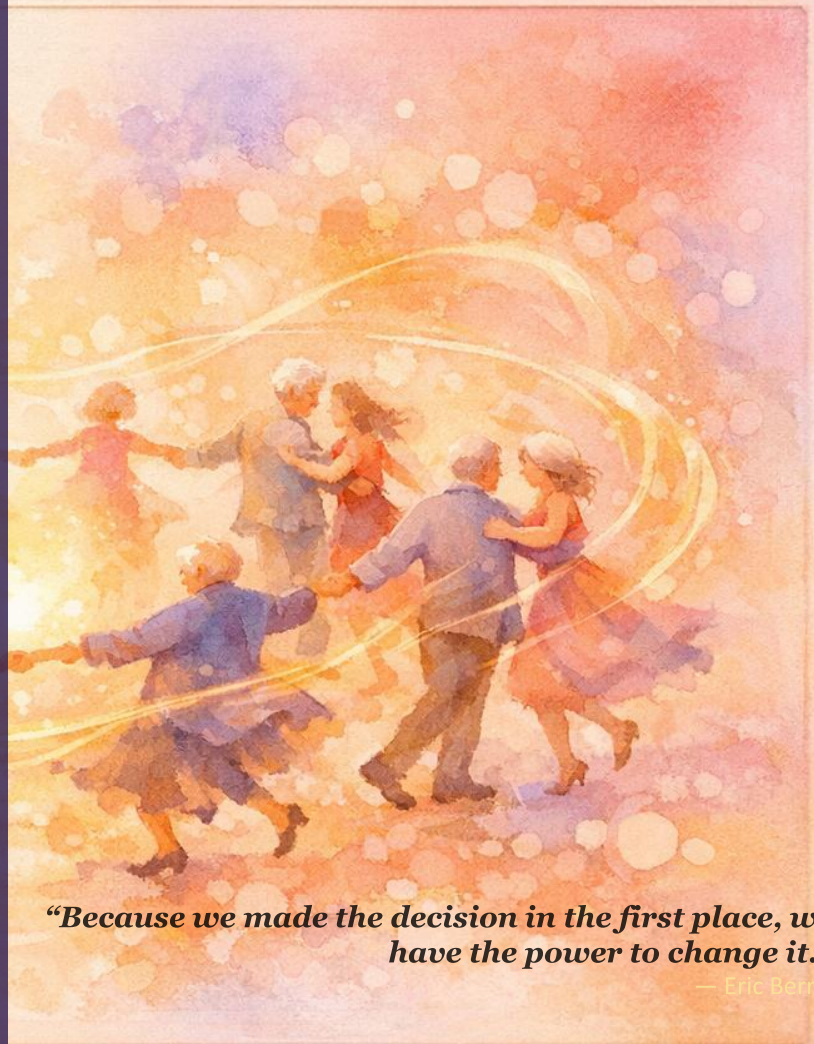


"Because we made the decision in the first place, we have the power to change it."

The Dance of Our Scripts

Life scripts are not lived in isolation they are performed in a dance with others, each person stepping into complementary roles.

- **We seek dance partners who fit our script** — unconsciously choosing people who confirm our earliest beliefs about self and others
- **Parent, Adult, and Child take turns leading** — ego states shift fluidly, with one stepping forward while others follow, shaping every interaction
- **The steps were choreographed in childhood** — but as adults we can learn new rhythms, choosing awareness over autopilot
- **Every generation passes the dance along** — young and old, we carry the rhythm of those before us, until we choose to change the music



“Because we made the decision in the first place, we have the power to change it.”

— Eric Berne



Key Takeaways

- 01** Life scripts are unconscious plans written in childhood — but they can be rewritten
 - 02** The 12 injunctions (Goulding & Goulding) are powerful prohibitions from the Child ego state of parents
 - 03** The 5 drivers (Kahler) are counterscript behaviours — conditions we place on our OKness
 - 04** Injunctions and drivers work together: the driver masks the injunction until stress exposes it
 - 05** Awareness is the first step to autonomy — making the unconscious conscious enables redecision
 - 06** Allowers and permissions replace conditional OKness with unconditional self-acceptance
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References & Further Reading

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Thank you