**Reversal Theory: An Overview**

**KEY POINTS**
- General theory about what motivates self and others.
- Practical tool for understanding change and your reaction to it.
- A structure for recognizing emotions and responding in new ways.
- Based on thirty years of research and applied use.

**Reversal Theory** is a psychological theory focusing on motivation and emotion. Whereas many theories of personality focus on hard-wired preferences, Reversal Theory focuses instead on an individual’s changeability and flexibility.

Reversal Theory is organized into four “domains” or areas of focus; each has two opposing motivational states. You reverse between states as situations - and the meaning you attribute to them - change. Your emotions result from whether your motives are being fulfilled or not – if they are, good emotions result; if they are not, negative emotions emerge.

The power of Reversal Theory lies in our ability to recognize the need for a state reversal, and then to change our states (called reversals) to respond to our needs – and those of others.

---

**MEANS-ENDS**
- **Serious**
  - Future Goals, Achievement
  - Values ambition & future focus
  - Avoids arousal, risk & anxiety
- **Playful**
  - Process, Passion & Fun
  - Moment driven & present focused
  - Seeks excitement to avoid boredom

**RULES**
- **Conforming**
  - Belonging, Rules
  - Values tradition & duty
  - Seeks group identity
- **Rebellious**
  - Freedom, Change
  - Rules seen as restrictive
  - Values innovation & change

**TRANSACTIONS**
- **Mastery**
  - Power, Ability
  - Values control & strength
  - Seeks competence & pride
- **Sympathy**
  - Relationship, Care
  - Values compassion
  - Seeks personal connection

**RELATIONSHIPS**
- **Self**
  - Self-Oriented
  - Values self-reliance & own needs
  - Takes personal responsibility
- **Other**
  - Other-Oriented
  - Values giving & generosity
  - Focused on others’ needs

---

**Want to learn more?**

Designed for use by - and with - individuals, leaders, and teams, *Reversing Forward* is a 76-page full-color practical guide about Reversal Theory. It is appropriate for either self-guided learning or as a workshop support tool. Trainers and consultants: Check out the companion *Reversing Forward* slides for use with your clients! Order at [www.typetalk.com](http://www.typetalk.com).

OKA (Otto Kroeger Associates) - [www.typetalk.com](http://www.typetalk.com)