

Racket Science?

About the difficulty in dealing with feelings

On a mild winter day, Irmgard was buried with her family around her. Her widower, my uncle, arranged a loving funeral with many personal memories. At the graveside, he brought events from the past to life and talked about the many plans that the two of them had still had and that death had brought an abrupt end to.



Robert Kirschner
Principal Partner

It was a classic funeral service that left plenty of room for remembrance and reflection. Irmgard's favorite songs provided a varied background for the stories about her life. But the inappropriateness of the lyrics of one particular song caused in me the impulse to burst out laughing. I felt a fit of laughter growing ever stronger, but the feeling suddenly turned into a violent expression of sadness.

What happened there?

It's not just tennis players who use rackets

Did a so-called "racket" almost take over the helm of my emotions in this situation? A racket, a concept from transactional analysis, is a repeated pattern or strategy that individuals subconsciously use to hide their true feelings and instead experience and express a substitute feeling. These substitute feelings are often more socialized and acceptable to the individual or those around them, but they are not directly linked to the person's current experience.

In my case, mourning was appropriate, but my relationship with Irmgard initially allowed me to attend the funeral from a respectful distance. It seemed unlikely that I could become emotional under the circumstances.

The function and purpose of rackets

Rackets serve multiple purposes. On the one hand, they enable individuals to cope with emotionally stressful situations by replacing unpleasant or socially unacceptable feelings with more acceptable feelings.



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On the other hand, however, they can be used to avoid real emotional closeness and to manipulate others by eliciting sympathy or support that would not otherwise have been given.

Rackets often develop in childhood as a reaction to the family environment and the ways of dealing with feelings learned there. For example, children who learn that anger is not accepted in their family may develop sadness as a substitute emotion to express their needs in a socially acceptable way.

Examples of typical rackets:

Anger as a racket: A person often shows anger or frustration, even in situations that do not justify such a reaction. This may be a mechanism to exert control because she has learned that anger has resulted in attention or compliance from others in the past.

Helplessness as a Racket: By displaying excessive helplessness or incompetence, a person may attempt to receive care or help from others. This racket may have arisen in childhood when the child learned that helplessness was an effective strategy for getting love and attention.

Worry as a racket: A person worries excessively or shows excessive anxiety in order to provoke affection or reassurance from others. This racket may have been developed because expressing worries was the only accepted form of showing emotions in childhood.

Excessive Recognition Seeking: An individual may constantly seek recognition and validation for achievement, a racket that stems from the fact that in childhood love and attention were conditional, particularly on achievement.

The problem with rackets is obvious: If, for example, I show anger even though I feel fear, what will those around me react to? If it is most likely a reaction to my anger, what will that reaction look like, and how helpful will that reaction be to me if what I really need is reassurance and understanding?

Even if you don't play tennis, knowing rackets can benefit you:

By recognizing and understanding one's own rackets, a person can learn to recognize inauthentic expressions of feeling and replace them with genuine emotions. This can lead to healthier interpersonal relationships because you communicate more authentically, act less manipulatively and get accurate responses to your real feelings. In addition, managing rackets can help you break the behavioral patterns that lead to recurring problems in relationships, at work or in other areas of life.

Transactional analysis therefore offers a valuable tool for personal development and growth by providing insights into one's own emotional processes and their impact on daily life.

The ARGOnauts as racket “athletes”:

In our role as a developer and provider of communication and leadership workshops, we attach great importance to the practical application of concepts that increase effectiveness in everyday professional life.

One element of this is the handling of rackets. Whether in coaching or in team-building workshops, we keep this concept in mind and provide support where necessary by raising awareness.

...back at the grave:

The situation at Irmgard’s final resting place was interesting for me. I realized that I was no longer in control of myself and cried without first experiencing the feeling of sadness. Seconds before, I was about to burst out laughing, but an unknown “something” stopped me from showing any racket emotion. What will happen when “Highway to Hell” is played at my funeral...?

I would like to take this opportunity and invite our dear readers of this newsletter to send me the most inappropriate pieces of music for events, celebrations or occasions of any kind to r.kirschner@argo.at.

Please skip Grönemeyer’s “I love you” at weddings – I suspect most of us have already experienced that.

The best entries will receive a small reward and will be published on our social media.

aboard

Our partner, **Christoph Vrzal**, has left ARGO. He has moved from consulting to management and will use his skills as Managing Director at ASSA ABLOY in the future. We wish you much success in this exciting challenge, Christoph!



Robert Kirschner is new on board - and for the first time in ARGO’s history, as a new shareholder! As an economist and certified business coach, he switches sides in the opposite direction from Christoph: After years of experience in sales and product management in domestic and international banks, he has been actively supporting us since the beginning of the year – and as is almost usual on board ARGO, immediately in turbulent times! As his colleague in the Rhomberg Sersa Rail Group project, I can attest that he has masterfully managed this challenge! Welcome aboard, Robert!



Be present



Embrace Diversity



Strive for Mastery



Live Compassion

We live,
feel
and reflect
on these
4 values at
ARGO.

For Christmas, in addition to donating money to Caritas for winter packages (<https://www.caritas-wien.at/gruft-winterpaket>), we wanted actively to live our value of Compassion, and so we took part at Caritas community cooking (<https://www.caritas-stadtteilarbeit.at/projekte/alle-projekte/community-cooking>), together with refugees who can come into contact with Austrians through this program. Making huge quantities of lentil soup, chickpea curry, salad and cinnamon rolls for distribution to the homeless was a challenge for us small-family cooks! After trying out our dishes together, we were ready to wash up and clean up. And we can see once again: Give the ARGOnauts a task and they will throw themselves into it full of enthusiasm and fun!



You can now follow on social media what ARGOnauts experience every day – at work, on the road or on board. Plus explanations of terms from our profession and typical quotes from our consultants. Have a look:



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