

# Chapter 10

## Workplace Incivility, Egopathic Bosses and Healthy Workplaces: Examining the Borderland between healthy and pathological

*Bad leaders cause much misery.* Robert Hogan and Robert Kaiser (2005)

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The Psychopathic boss doesn't understand that the job of leadership is to fully utilize human potential, to create organizations in which people can grow and learn while still achieving a common objective, to nurture the human spirit. (The psychopathic) leader is devoted to self and self alone. Business history is populated by such creatures, from Henry Ford and Walt Disney to Harold Geneen and Andy Fastow.

*We favor explanations based on concrete personalities rather than abstract social forces.*

Robert Hogan and Robert Kaiser (2005)

Taking their story into account.

High Character bosses do something that low character bosses do not. They take a person's situation and story into account. This seems like a simple thing to do and yet for many bosses it is almost an impossible psychological hurdle to achieve. They just can't bring themselves to care about the other guy enough to adjust their thinking and ask if there is a special situation or extenuating circumstances. If the employee says there are circumstances, the boss can't bring him or herself to care enough to take that information into account. Judgment is the natural state of mind of the egopath (#3). They have to focus on the negative, on the discrepancy between what the person is doing and the high standard they impose on him or her.

Egopathic bossing is about not caring about the supervisee's life and dreams and hopes and disappointments! But employees NEED for them to be able to consider these things. The quality, and in some cases, the physical health of the workers' lives depend upon it. Stress is most often created from bosses not caring about the impact of their words on the target employee or from policies or disinterest of the company.

On the other hand, in order to deal effectively with egopaths, ego healthy people need to remember what a tremendous drag it is on the egopath's mind to try to stay mindful of others' feelings and needs. Their brains are not geared toward this task at all. It "makes no sense" to them to "waste time" and energy giving an ounce of thought to employees' needs and sensibilities. The egopath's mind is geared to "working hard," and "staying focused," and "getting the job done," and "making it happen." These concepts come to the egopath easily. He or she feels so good about chasing the American dream of success and productivity. We have to remember that, to an egopath, empathically considering an employee's feelings seems like "slowing down," "wasting time," and "losing focus," and "increasing the chances for failure or mediocrity." When you look at it that way the egopathic behavior begins to make more sense. The egopath has never developed the Maslovian "Eupsychian" concept that says when you honor an employee's needs and feelings you are creating a work atmosphere which will engender excellence, efficiency, and high quality products and service.

The High Functioning Egopath

The high functioning egopath has adjectives that describe him or her which are usually positively

connoted words in our language. It is very difficult to understand how a “conscientious” leader is at risk for egopathic acting out behavior. And yet this shift must take place if coaches, supervisors, and therapists are to work with egopaths who want to change their behavior or who are mandated to change.

For instance, Holland’s personality traits of “conscientious,” “rational,” and “conventional” are traits a person can be proud of. And yet it is just these “types” who are most likely to commit workplace incivility when under stress, deprivation, or mensorial excitement.\*

\*mensorial excitement means having a head of steam while working toward a project and being so enthusiastic that angry words come flying out at anyone who shows a lack of sharpness or nose-to-the-grindstone readiness to work hard.

### Violence in the Workplace

We all fear and loath workplace violence. However, an understudied reality is that wherever there is violence there is egopathy. Who has the egopathy? The perpetrator of the violence has to be held accountable for allowing a violent drive to be engendered within them, certainly. But it is even more important to look at the personality (see definition) of the "power up" persons in the workplace who did not follow anti-violence protocol. (see this is section xx)

There is a story in Creative Aggression that tells of a mild mannered woman who worked for a cruel and inconsiderate boss (an egopath) for 20 years until one day she had had enough and she blew up at him (p. 222). It is a huge mistake to assume that every act of workplace violence is completely caused by a person with problems and that those problems were the cause of the violence. It must be assumed for the investigation and for future prevention measures that half the reason for the violence was the disregard by the boss or a fellow employee for this person’s dignity and self-esteem.

“Going postal” is now an accepted phrase meaning “to become violent and commit acts of aggression against one’s boss or fellow workers.” I call this Retributional Rage (see Chapter 14).

In the home these behaviors are usually referred to as “abuse” or “mistreatment.” But seldom at work are they called these accurate but incendiary names. Until 1999 there was no real name to call these insensitive peccadilloes. When Dan Goleman described a corporate vice-president who shamed his team by asking “Where did you go to college?” Goleman helped us understand that this was an example of low emotional intelligence. But what descriptor can we use to describe this “low IQ” behavior? There has never been a name for it in the literature. If you can’t name it you can’t claim it and that’s exactly what has been happening during the past 4,000 years of organized businesses.

### Workplace Incivility

Christine Pearson, Christine Porath, and Lynne Anderson have been writing about workplace incivility for 10 years. When you consider that uncivil acts have been happening since the beginning of time it makes you query, “Why now?” and “Why did it take so long?” The answer may lie in human nature. “Might makes right,” the saying goes. Men and women without power have always known the inadvisability of confronting the boss or slave driver because there was always something unspoken that seemed to ruin any request for pity or preference. The boss always seemed to win out no matter how dire the state of the need.

Workplace incivility happens half because of the workplace environment which is (a) how the workers are being treated, (b) the amount of stress that is created, and (c) the level of communication that is being encouraged. The other half of the reason for workplace incivility springs from the person’s ego development. Ego development has a direct influence on how one behaves in the workplace.

Each one of us had a childhood developmental “script” which predisposes us to treat others poorly. In Muriel James’ book, “The OK Boss” she says,

“Children who are cared for properly, who receive positive attention, and who are encouraged to

think for themselves are likely to continue feeling OK. They tend to select a constructive I'm OK, You're OK script and later in life become OK bosses. On the other hand, if a child is not wanted, if something goes wrong during pregnancy or birth, if it is "just one more mouth to feed," if the parents feel resentful, frustrated, or angry at the responsibility, or disappointed in the sex or appearance of the child, the child is likely to begin feeling not-OK and to select a destructive script that matches the feeling" (p. 124).

Of course, James is only scratching the surface of what could have gone wrong during childhood that would leave the employee with an "I'm not OK" script that would precipitate him or her to feeling the need to say or do something which could be called a "workplace incivility." An attempt at an acronym for all childhood mistreatment is listed in Form 20 called "TRAUNCIL" on page 100.

The end of the chapter will be showing how the etiology of anti-social personality disorder, sadistic personality disorder, and even psychopathic personality disorder can all be found in the most innocent of hurtful behaviors because they all have to do with a disorder, a dysfunction of the normal human quality of empathy. Yes, there would be no empathy without training and character development.

#### More Workplace Incivility

Susan was willing to schedule the new person twice a month and me once. When confronted she said, "Well, Sally took Veronica's place so she has the right to the schedule." So the RULES of interpersonal conduct (RIC) of seniority, the PROTOCOL of altrucharacterism, went out the window because of the ruse of favoritism but she couldn't admit to it because she knew it was wrong and she didn't want to be caught. Therefore, she beat cognitive dissonance by "manipulating the facts and trumping up the charges." But in this case she did the opposite; she minimized, whitewashed, and sanitized she behavior. That's what egopaths do, they condemn, blame, and find fault with others and then sanitize, excuse, justify and whitewash their behavior!! And they can do it without blinking of an eye. And yet we don't call them psychopaths. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference.

The mental mechanism is that they make decisions about the other in a semi-subconscious part of their brain. Some egopaths are aware they do it and others are not aware. The brain is a powerful tool. It can automatically make the decisions. (See Joseph LeDoux). If the person could bring the decision making into consciousness they might feel too guilty about the judgmental retributive maneuvering and refrain from doing it. If you are an egopath and would like to write me and tell how you do it, my email address is [Drcedwood@aol.com](mailto:Drcedwood@aol.com).

#### Egocentric bosses

They know they've got you by the balls. I hate to use such language, but such shocking behavior demands shocking language. Bosses know that when they want to fire you all they have to do is call you into their office and do the deed. They have very little fear about what will happen to them if they do not follow the due process protocol. They also know that if they make you upset, you will be even more upset as you think about confronting him/her. This reluctance works well for the egopathic boss who doesn't want to be held accountable for his/her behavior.

Workers unite. If we all pull together and have a collective vow that "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take this anymore!" then we can make a difference. The next time you are called and told to meet your egopathic boss in HR say, "Okay, but first I am going to visit the president's office. Then make a phone call to the president of the company and say, "Sir, Madam, there are some shenanigans going on here and I thought you'd be interested to know about them. He or she will either be too intrigued to say No and invite you into his/her office, or they already know about your termination and will still invite you into their office because they don't want to seem uncaring and cruel by saying, "I already know about it and I don't care. I've given it my stamp of approval." There is also a good chance the president will not approve of the move if he or she knew about it. As soon as they learn about it they

might reverse it. But the most likely scenario is not the president reversing it, but simply accepting it but then sending a signal to the boss that he or she is not handling their people well enough to be trusted and within time they will probably lose their job as well.

If you find yourself in HR or in your boss' office being told you're out, just say "Wait a minute" and dial up the president of the company with your cell phone. They can't stop you; it's not against the law. Remember that. The egopathic one-ups in this situation hope you'll feel like you're breaking the law or some rule of society by standing firm. You are not. You are simply reacting in an Adult ego state to protect yourself and get your human needs met. Humans have been notorious over the years (Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein) for completely ignoring other's needs. You must get it very clear in your mind that only you can stand up for yourself against the tyrants.

If bosses (who were workers just a few years ago) were to develop a little fear about arbitrarily firing someone they might forego it or at least give the employee due process before the termination. The average worker is also a human being with needs. All humans have the need for due process. This country, the United States of America, was founded on the principle of due process in its court system.

Not every employee is determined to keep their job. Some employees would be glad to leave their job if only they could get a nudge from their bosses. But most bosses don't know how to conduct a termination meeting in order for the employee to get his or her needs met. Very few bosses (or professors) have the skills to ask questions in such a way that the employee basically terminates him/herself.

What is it about the altruistic part of the human brain that it shuts down as soon as opportunities arise to make money?

#### Axis One into Axis Two

It starts with Axis I feeling bad, scared, unsure, insecure. Then the person does something, or doesn't do something (Gretel just watches TV instead of doing her chores) which impacts someone else (Cory is upset). That person gets angry and starts haranguing Gretchen which hurts her feelings. At this point the Axis I situation morphs into Axis II. She starts feeling resentful and has ideas about how to get Cory back or passive aggressively starts resisting his requests just out of spite. She may become aggressive as she complains about his behavior or even hits him when they fight.

#### Employees and Students behaving badly:

It is not only the powerful who behave badly. Those without power can rise up and express egopathy, as well. I once had two students from the same foreign country. Both had such thick accents I had to struggle to understand them. After many weeks of saying nothing, I calmly and kindly asked one to repeat a word more slowly because she had double tongued it and I had hardly understood her. This was an opportunity to steer them in a direction of working on their pronunciation. (I love helping people to pronounce words well. I've done it for years and I usually get a cooperative reaction.)

The intelligent young woman just looked embarrassed. She didn't even try. I was prepared to do as I always do, which is to immediately praise them for saying the word as a reward for trying, and assuaging any hurt feelings. But since she didn't try, I didn't get a chance to praise, so I went on with the lesson. At the break, she asked to talk to me in private. She proceeded to find great fault with me for "embarrassing her" in front of the whole class. I handled it well, being immediately rueful and saying, "I'm sorry" twice. I still tried to encourage her. She said, "No one else has ever said anything. I have achieved a degree already!" Evidently, she had no idea she was speaking with such a pronounced accent because no one had had the intestinal fortitude to confront such a horrible accent.

How does ego play into this situation? I believe we see ego on two fronts. One, her ego development was so poor that she took this opportunity for learning as a put-down and as an affront to her intelligence. Secondly, she had grown up so unstructured, that is, she had missed out on the character building interactions of a loving parent that she felt "entitled" to be allowed to speak any way she felt like speaking. A little unfettered narcissism?

Regardless, I was left feeling blindsided and hurt. I had difficulty teaching the second half of the class. I couldn't believe that just asking her to try saying a word more clearly would draw such a hurt and defensive/aggressive reaction. I am always asking Spanish speakers to help me say words in Spanish correctly. We all need to work on our self-righteous egos. Including me? Was I arrogant to think that it was okay to help her begin enunciating her words more clearly so that I, and her future American clients, could understand what she was saying? Her response was, "No one else has complained or said anything about my speech!" She did not stop and realize, "Of course, they didn't. They were too afraid they'd get reamed out like I'm getting right now!!" In this day and age of "political correctness" (which I am in agreement with), we have to realize that someone not saying something about us is no guarantee that we are being seen as perfect and appropriate in every way. Word to the wise: try to see a caring person's correction as a genuine desire to help us be a better person, not as a put-down.

How should Presidents behave? President Washington read and adhered to a list of etiquette which was written in the 1500's. He wanted to treat others as he wanted to be treated. How should managers behave? What are their guidelines? Can we accept this as a list of guidelines? Can we call this attitude and behavior "Altrucharacteristic?" (a combination of "altruistic" and "characteristic") Here is my list of behaviors which I would like to see all managers adhere to.

### 10 "C" Behaviors of High Character (AltruCharacteristic) Management

They are...

1. **Calm:** Being in control of their amygdala, do not allow the self to become emotionally hijacked. High Emotional Intelligence (EQ) does not get physically or verbally aggressive.
2. **Conscientious:** Being willing to control one's "dark side," to control the need to retribute and aggress against others. Even when they have been wronged, they adhere to the RIC: (rules of interpersonal conduct) which avoid workplace incivility. They honor the feelings and sensibilities of others.
3. **Communicative:** Being willing to give information to help others understand; telling it straight with the other person's needs in mind, having no hidden agenda.
4. **Caring:** Really interested in the other person's story and reasons. Doesn't consider them "excuses." Truly tries to understand. Is free of ego defensive acting out.
5. **Curious:** Willing to ask questions with genuine interest at hearing the answers. Tries to be good at helping the other person communicate fully and reach their dreams and goals. Has a "win-win" attitude.
6. **Compassionate:** (the FEELING part) Truly able to feel and show empathy for the employee's answers to the manager's questions. Slow to attack and terminate an employee. Has high EQ.
7. **Considerate:** (the THINKING part) Truly willing to consider the other person's point of view, ideas, limitations, or needs as a way of getting along and creating a psychologically healthy workplace. Discounts gossip and rumors. Explanations about missteps are honored.
8. **Collaborative:** Having the flexibility, the magnanimity to try out new ways or see things from the others person's point of view. Able to do "brainstorming." Theory "Z" management style.
9. **Complimentary:** Employees need praise and hearty appreciation from their boss (Carnegie, 1936). Is willing to defer and compliment in the middle of a disagreement to keep emotions under control.

10. Comfortable with the responsibilities and the power; with confronting and remonstrating with employees/students and with having them remonstrate, in return, with him or her; (from Post Modern Supervision) Contribute: Able to apologize when it is called for.

## Coworkers Can Be Cruel, Too

### A Personal Story

One Sunday I was working as an intake coordinator at a major hospital. I had been paged earlier in the morning to do an assessment of a young woman in the emergency room. Her mother and father were there with her and clearly the objects of her ire. I began doing what came naturally: family therapy. I could see the communication gaps begin to be bridged and the icy, distant feelings begin to melt. I was so glad I had my talents at the ready to help this family. I thought the hospital would be so proud of me.

I was certainly proud of the work I had done I could not contain my good feeling. I ran into a coworker, an M.S.W, the next day and shared that I had had an interesting encounter that weekend and had done some family therapy. "What do you mean you did family therapy?" she shot back at me. "Don't you know that if they found out... went to the psychiatric unit... wouldn't be happy." I couldn't quite make out what she was saying. The tirade was incomprehensible. I fell back on my therapy skills and used reflection and summary to help her shape her argument, but to no avail. I tried to validate but to be honest I was struggling to stay calm and supportive. In the face of such blatant fault-finding and blame-throwing, it is difficult to stay in our Adult ego state. I will always wonder if she was premenstrual or suffering some mild psychotic or borderline state. All I knew was that I was hurt and confused and disappointed that my caring, professional work had been trampled on. Pearls before swine? I don't like that phrase but sometimes when you are ruthlessly raked over the coals for something you did well and feel proud of, the phrase fits.

The Dallas Morning News: Carpool Read. "The B-minus that changed my life" by Kelli Renfrow.

My new boss, a C student whose college was "harder" than mine, knew exactly how to push my buttons. How to dangle the carrots of money, travel and writing opportunities just out of reach. During my short tenure that I describe as the 90 day's war -- for my soul -- I struggled to please someone who couldn't be pleased. Someone who moved the bar on every emotional whim. I couldn't figure out how to make an A. And then, one day, he lost his temper and threatened to fire me. Apparently, I wasn't borderline A-B -- I was making an F. Even as my confidence and self-esteem were slipping, I considered hanging on. I thought about pushing the rock up the hill no matter how many times it rolled down on me, just to prove I was the one who could get it to the top. But it dawned on me that this would be the real mistake. So I walked away, resigning in the face of renewed promises of fame and fortune from a boss who had calmed down. As I left the worst job I've ever had, embarrassed that I was a quitter, Mr. Tinsley's words came back to me. Though it had been a disaster, I had learned to listen to my heart. And I had learned to spot a soul-sucking despot at 50 paces. Lessons I'd never forget. Oct. 2, 2006.

These kinds of bosses are true jerks and egopaths to say the least. They are sick puppies and they don't even know it.

## Categorizing the Styles of interacting

	<u>The Egopathic Response</u> (Theory X, Parent Ego State, No psychology)	<u>The AltruCharacteristic Response</u> (Theory Y, Z, Adult Ego State, Positive Psychology)
1.	It looked wrong to me, therefore, it is wrong.	It looked wrong, but I might have misperceived
2.	Because your inner self had wrong thinking, feeling, attitude: (you are a wrong person)	I don't know what went on inside the person. Maybe it was a logical and caring attitude. I don't know.
3.	Lacks curiosity about WHY did they did that since the above three points are forgone conclusion.	Feeling curious, open to others' point of view and explanation.
4.	If I talk to him/her, it will only create more trouble. Since this is true I have no recourse but to go (Parent Ego) and complain to their boss.	Since I am not sure I will talk to the person first and listen to their point of view (h.e.a.r.t.) and I'm sure it will help.
5.	I will plan my punishment before I hear the target's point of view.	I will plan my intervention after I learn about and consider the target's point of view.

### “The Monolithic Egopathic Dictum”

“As the manager, if I deem that what was said about you is correct and justifiable, it becomes carved in stone and there is nothing you can do about it.” Once I carve it in stone, you either quit or you live with it. There is no alternative dispute resolution/conflict resolution process available to you which is not completely biased and bogus. Tough noogies is you don't like it.”

Conflict Model to be placed here.