

- Chapter 1: The Emotional Intelligence Movement.
- Chapter 2: The Successes and Failures of the EQ Movement
- Chapter 3: Egopathy: what is it and how does it work?
- Chapter 4: Big Bad Bullies (BBBs) and PCDs (Power, Control, and Direction.)
- Chapter 5: Narcissistic Personality, Sadistic Personality Disorder, Psychopathy, Anti-Social Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and their Relation to Egopathy
- Chapter 6: Egopathic Defenses/ Ego Expressiveness, Schemas and Hidden Agendas
- Chapter 7: The Roots of Disempathy and Cruelty: The Developmental Personology of Egopathy
- Chapter 8: Families Behaving Badly
- Chapter 9: Doctors and Professors Behaving Badly
- Chapter 10: Workplace Incivility, Egopathic Bosses, and Healthy Workplaces
- Chapter 11: Personality and EQ Assessment: Which one reveals Egopathy Best?
- Chapter 12: Egopathic Characters in books, on TV, and in the movies.
- Chapter 13: Egopaths in Academic Literature, the Popular Press, and Other Media
- Chapter 14: Public and Private Figures Behaving Badly in the News
- Chapter 15: Happiness, Health, and Positive Psychology
- Chapter 16: So what can I do about it? Remonstrating and High Character Communication;
- Chapter 17: A class in Parenting/Relationships in High School; a class in Developmental Personology in graduate schools.
- Chapter 18: The Vocabulary of Egopathy and High Character Communication
- Chapter 19: The Structure of Emotional Intelligence and Egopathy: The Diagrams, Figures, and Lists
- References

## Chapter 16: “How can we help?” Dealing with Egopaths or High Character Remonstrations

We must start this chapter with the needs of the human mind and spirit. Being human means having a dream and going through the process of making it come true. We have this dream sometimes for only a few moments and yet it organizes and energized our self actualizing behavior for the rest of our lives. Our happiness and, by extension, our physical health is very dependent on our successfully realizing these dreams. I know that there are a million pundits who say you can't let your happiness be dependent on the outside conditions of your life. This may be true. But if we all buy into that concept then we will not be able to accept this new concept I am presenting in this chapter. We must be able to find out voice and say out loud what we need.

### Disclaimer

I must also begin this chapter with a disclaimer. If you choose to confront a loved one and “throw this book” at them, figuratively or literally, I accept no responsibility for the damage that doing so may do. Egopaths are fragile and volatile human beings that must be handled with kid gloves. That means you must know this personality style inside and out before you can successfully remonstrate with them. Their self-preservation skills are honed to a sharp edge and will mercilessly cut you to shreds if you try to hold a mirror up to them. Their sense of self is so fragile that they feel like they are being destroyed with even so much as a hint of fault-finding. This condition we are calling “egopathy” precipitates a full blown

defense and counter-attack if they sense that you are trying to change them. “Change” or “find fault” means “destroy” in the hypersensitive mind of an egopath (see the “Egopath 10 “C” List on page xx).

Egopaths try to protect themselves by disowning feelings and by being very slow to admit to having any feelings. Dr. Higgenbotham, the psychologist on page xx, said several times in the course of our meetings, “I don’t have any feelings about that. I am completely professional.” I responded in a way that showed emotional intelligence (being in touch with, yet in control of, my feelings) by saying, “I felt badly when I realized I had not done the group the way you wanted me to.” Show the egopath that a person (you) can reveal feelings and not be out of control or fearful.

There are some circumstances in which even I would be led to say, “Just let it alone. Let that person be. There is nothing that can be done. They will never change and never develop empathy for you or anyone else. This case is a lost cause. There is nothing that can help them. They are so steeped and stained with the egocentric, self-preservative stance that they no longer have the mental capacity to consider someone else’s point of view.” But these cases are few. Let’s assume that your case is not hopeless and move on with the program.

Egopaths have a very underdeveloped “Adult” ego state. In Freudian terms it is said that they have an “underdeveloped superego.” The superego is the part of the self-structure which houses a conscience which keeps us from doing things that would make us feel guilty. In Transactional Analysis terms it is said that they have a very contaminated “Adult ego state.” Contaminated by what? By their Parent and Child ego states. Read Born to Win by Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, p. 223.

### Confronting the Egopath

In his book, Psychotherapy and Growth, Robert Beavers wrote about “confronting” a patient. “The term confrontation as used here is not to be confused with a hostile demand or the ‘heroic confrontations’ a therapist may use when deeply alarmed about his patient’s behavior... The ethical problem is to be able to be direct without being disrespectful and without implication of censure” (p. 167.)

You can hear Dr. Beavers struggling with the importance of confronting the patient and also, the importance of not hurting the patient. A solution to this dilemma is to give a unique name to the process of “firmly, and yet gently, and with compassion,” confronting a person. I have chosen to use the word “remonstration.” Yes, it’s true the word already means to “confront angrily” but very few people know this and the word is almost never used in American society. It may be used more often in England. I think it is a marvelous word to use to be mean “appropriately and in the Adult ego state” to confront a person about their behavior. There is nothing in the Latin root of the word that makes it a poor choice. The Latin word “monstrare” simply means “to show.”

### The Six Ways to Respond to an Egopath or any “Non-Adult”

1. Summarize what you hear
2. Use “I” messages to share feelings
3. Describe what you see
4. Describe the intent or need that you are hearing “You really...”
5. Describe their feelings; better yet get them to tell you their feelings
6. Try to interpret what you think is really going on. Don’t try this with an egopath.

1. Summarize what you hear

“So you went to the concert but got there late because they were working on the street that leads to the concert hall and that make you angry and almost ruined the concert.”

2. Use “I” messages to share feelings

“When you... I feel... then you name a feeling.”

“When you don’t tell me you’re going to be late, I feel disregarded. Like you don’t respect me.”

Sometimes you can use a “you” message but it can be tricky

“When you spend all your time with him, I feel like you don’t care about meeting me.”

3. Describe what you see

“I see that you dropped your jacket on the floor.”

4. Describe the intent or need that you are hearing “You really...”

“You really want me to stop calling you at work because it bothers you, right?”

“You really thought that visiting the capitol was a lame idea and that’s why you didn’t want to go.”

#### The “You Really” Technique

1. When someone is throwing “you” messages

2. When someone is doing something that they want to do and all your normal pleading has not worked

3. When someone did not do a requested (in the past) behavior and you are “reminding” them of it.

4. When someone is doing something that you dislike and you want to request that they not do it.

5. Describe their feelings; better yet get them to tell you their feelings

“Sounds like you’re feeling, um, well, what are you feeling?”

6. Try to interpret what you think is really going on. Don’t try this with an egopath.

“Seems like you didn’t get the ego attachment you needed as a baby and now you’re trying to get that supportive relationship from me.”

This is called “interpretation” in psychoanalysis. Since there is such a disconnect between what we truly feel (repressed material) and what we are doing (as a result) there is often the opportunity to point out the disconnect and encourage self awareness. As a person becomes self-aware they are less vulnerable to the mental operations and defenses that are used to avoid, minimize, and escape from old material (memories, regrets, guilt) and current anxious feelings.

When dealing with an egopath, remember the “L” dance. One step forward, that’s okay. Let them know how you feel, what you need, how you’re hurt. When they begin to balk, throw blame, or attack. Don’t take an aggressive step forward, don’t take a withdrawing step back, step to the side, milady, and use the “you really technique.”

I would like to address the general public’s ability to understand these concepts. It is beginning to seem as though it is low. I have been teaching graduate students in counseling and I do not see a lot of light bulbs glowing over their heads. I can only imagine what would happen if these concepts were to be taught to high school students. But what is really disconcerting is that I am afraid the psychologists I have dealt with would have equal difficulty understanding and digesting these concepts. Is it because they are egopathic themselves? How well are we screening and encouraging the ego development of our graduate school students? I’ve found one article that describes a research project of giving an Emotional Intelligence level to medical students. This is very necessary considering the EI level of some doctors (see Ch. 9). But other professionals are equally able to devolve into their egopathic/PCD selves, especially when given power. Understanding this regressive process is of paramount importance in our jobs. The referee for the professional basketball game was recently fined and suspended after he overreacted to a pro basketball player’s snickering. His wounded spirit got the better of him and he gave the player a demerit. His loss of control over his Parent-Child Ego Axis will cost him dearly (see page xx).

#### Does Exposure to EQ Information Change the emotional intelligence of Students and Patients?

I have just recently experienced the horror and tragedy of the Virginia Tech killings. Yet again, a

deeply wounded and maldeveloped young man has taken his own life after taking the lives of innocent bystanders. He had gone “voluntarily” to a psychiatric hospital but had only stayed a short while. What did he learn in the time that he was under a professional’s care? Had he been taught about emotional intelligence and the wounded ego, would he have been able to have seen his situation in a more grounded way? The answer to this question must be discovered with more research.

The five stages of the Development of a Momentary Psychopath.

1. Early life negative experiences
2. Later life acting out the deficits of this earlier life which sets him up for ridicule and rejection
3. His continued and augmented wounded sense of self
4. A short period of increasingly unfortunate misfortunes befall him which drive him to plan for an extreme form of retribution and revenge.
5. He finally finds himself in completely untenable emotional state and decides to commit the act of violence to get revenge and, in a bizarre way, communicate his deep pain and disappointment in the life he had found himself in.

## What Is AltruCharacteristic Communication?

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### High Character Managers

1. Calm: Being in control of their amygdala, does not allow self to become emotionally hijacked. High Emotional Intelligence (EQ).
2. Kind Character: Willing to mitigate one’s “dark side” to honor the feelings and sensibilities of others. Even when they have been wronged, they adhere to the RIC: (rules of interpersonal conduct) which avoids workplace incivility.
3. Communicative: Being willing to give information to help others understand; tells it straight with the others’ needs in mind, avoids speaking partial truths to serve his/her 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 maneuvers. Avoids conflict.
5. Curious: Willing to ask questions with genuine interest at hearing the answers. Is good at helping the other person communicate fully and reach their dreams and goals. Has a “win-win” attitude
6. Compassionate: Truly able to feel and show empathy for the target person’s answer to their questions. Slow to attack and terminate an employee. High EQ.
7. Considerate: Truly willing to consider the other person’s point of view, ideas, limitations, or needs as a way of getting along and creating an empowered workplace. Discounts gossip and rumors. Explanations from employees are valued and honored.
8. Collaborative: Having the flexibility, the magnanimity, the diversity-mindedness to try to do it differently or see it from the others’ point of view. Able to do “brainstorming.”
9. Complimentary: Willing to give employees praise and hearty appreciation. Willing to compliment even in the middle of a disagreement to keep emotions under control.
10. Comfortable: With the responsibilities; with the power; with confronting and remonstrating with employees and allowing them to remonstrate with him/her. Contrite: Able to apologize when it is called for. Feels compunction.

## Poor Character Managers

1. Gruff, Angry, Aggressive, Coarse, Crude, Low EQ
2. Unkind, Sarcastic, Rude, Flippant, Gossipy, Judgmental, Retributive, Punitive. Once they perceive themselves to have been wronged they feel the target deserves no kindness. Often commits workplace incivility.
3. Shows poor communication skills:
  - A. Non- or half communication
  - B. Agenda-driven communication
  - C. Misleading communication to serve a hidden agenda
  - D. False communication
4. Alexithymic; no empathy toward the other and how a change in plans or a new rule makes them feel.
5. Is uninterested in hearing/ responds to the other person's point of view with a 5 D\* comment. Has an ego defensive shield up to protect him/herself. Has a "win-lose" attitude. Also a "I'm OK/You're Not OK attitude.
6. Unable to feel with or for the other person. Is so focused on his/her own agenda and security that altruism is lost.
7. Is unwilling to consider that the other person is giving real information about their personal needs. Tends to characterize the others' explanation as "excuses," "blame-laying" or "defending."
8. "Disses" any expression of opposing ideas and is unwilling to considerate changing his behavior or comfort level to accommodate the other person.
9. Refuses to give praise. Says that it is not necessary; after all, she or he doesn't get praise from *their* boss.
10. Uncomfortable with open communication. Doesn't communicate with ease and certainly does not allow remonstrance from his/her employees (post-modern, emotional intelligence). Is "alexaccountable," meaning they are unable to allow assessment of their behavior by their employees.

## The Psychodynamics of Egopathy

If you look at aerodynamics or hydrodynamics you will find a basic premise for these studies and reason for being. It is to study how one body reacts when another body moves. When a wing moves through the air the air moves as a result and the wing responds in a predictable fashion. When a paddle moves through the water, the water responds to the paddle in a predictable fashion. Electrodynamics is the same.

It is no different in psychodynamics which is Freud's contribution to understanding the human mind. When one person says or does something, human beings will respond in predictable ways. For instance, when you do not obey an egopath, he or she will feel slighted and his sense of self feels in jeopardy. They will, therefore, begin to think of a way to protect themselves. They may withdraw but more likely they will begin thinking of ways for you to withdraw. By that I mean they will be thinking of ways they can eject, reject, or cause you suffering so you'll leave.

Egopaths have very little ability to be flexible or to take criticism. They see the world through the lens of "self." Egopaths have a tendency to construe comments and actions as having a dire reflection on their soul (that is their sense of self, even their entire self system.) So naturally they want to respond in a way that protects them and vindicates them.

The word "vindicates" is very important to an egopath for this reason. They feel very deeply the threat of shame, being found out, being found "less than" in some way. If they can successfully retaliate against an offender or even someone who appeared to be a potential offender, they feel a great sense of satisfaction. They have little control over this set of circumstances.

People in general are in deep need of having resolution of their problematic interactions with others. They may have been abused, or hurt, or slighted, or betrayed. We really don't have a better word for the

feeling of being betrayed or “screwed over” when we were promised something. If the person who did a job on you was an egopath, then there is little chance you will achieve closure or resolution to the problem. Why is that? Because egopaths have very little ability to bend their nature in order to meet the needs of others.

For instance, if an egopath abused you, he will deny that it ever happened. If an egopath screwed you over in a deal, he will say it was from external contingencies that he had no control over. If an egopath rejected you in a cruel or hurtful way, he will say he was forced to do it because of your behavior. If an egopath behaved in a totally disregarding or dismissive way, he will say it was because of some socially acceptable notion. If an egopath raped you, he will say it is in the nature of man to need sex and you put yourself in his path, and therefore deserved it. The list of excuses and accountability-owning-deflections go on and on. They are masters at deflections, neutralizing, and blame-laying.

Dealing with an egopath usually means that you will have to leave him behind and just move on with your life and try to deal with his abusive behavior as best you can. All the admonitions of well-meaning people over the years such as, “you can’t change them, they have to want to change,” or “you just have to go on with your life and not dwell on what he did to you,” were all coined with an egopath in mind.

### How Can We Interact?

We can help by not behaving like an egopath which is to say, we should behave with high emotional intelligence. Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” When we deal with an egopath, or anyone for that matter, we need to have a set of rules and behaviors firmly in our minds. I know this is difficult to do. Even today, after years of learning, I still falter when it comes to dealing with someone who is quick to overpower me.

If those of us who are not egopaths will collectively support one another in our struggle, eventually we can overcome these souls who are out to torture us. Many of them are not conscious of their behavior. They are shocked and hurt when we confront them. We have to know how to proceed carefully, cautiously, and considerately.

Follow the Red flag rules. When someone says or does something that upsets you always

1. Slow down
2. Don't react right away
3. Become curious about why the person would say or do such a thing
4. Say, "You really... (wanted to get some anger off your chest there, is that right?)
5. No matter what the answer say, "OH, I see" and then just wait. You may have to sit in silence for a few moments. It's okay. No one will die or even hurt. The other person may begin to feel uncomfortable. You may begin to feel uncomfortable. But hang with it.
6. The other person is processing your behavior. They are realizing that the behavior doesn't seem prudent or necessary to you. Nine out the 10 times they will begin to explain Why they are saying what they are saying without you even asking for an explanation.  
(Don't forget I've spoken a digital recording about the steps of high character remonstrance from full of self to completely altruistic)

The Egopath finds it difficult to follow the rules of interpersonal conduct.

### **Rules for Interpersonal Conduct (RIC)**

**The egopath tends to:**

- 1. See what the other person is doing as wrong; they gravitate toward thinking how the other person is in the wrong job, has the wrong rank, and why it is wrong for that person to be there.**

2. **Think how it is right for them to move against that person; to protect ourselves from the aversive affects of that person's behavior.**
3. **Move against the other with words or behavior which is designed to malign, derogate, censure, hurt, and remove.**
4. **Follow through with aggressive words or retributive behavior.**
5. **Feel satisfied that they have taught that person a lesson after their retribution.**
6. **Not apologize or make the situation right. It feels complete to them. They feel no remorse or regret.**

What NON-egopaths do in their heads:

1. We need to care enough about the other person; to be curious as to why they did what they did.
2. Be willing to subjugate our tendencies
3. If we have moved against someone, we feel a little guilty (if you're an egopath you won't feel guilty).

**What we SHOULD do in our conduct.**

1. **We need to go to the person and ask for why they did what they did.**
2. **Ask him what we can do for him to help him see it our way**
3. **We need to go to him and apologize for our aggressive behavior.**

In professional tennis there are line judges who watch very carefully to see if a tennis ball has hit within the bounds of the court. If it has not, then the judge calls out, "Out." However, they are not working alone. They are not the final judge. There is a court judge who sits atop a tower so they can see the court very well. If a line judge does not make a good call it is the job of the court judge to call it differently and say "overruled." This is the exact job of any administrator who has multiple employees under him/her. In the case of "Larry" in chapter XX the department chair was reluctant to take the time to really look into the situation and judge whether the professor had made an "ego-free" call when she failed Larry. Egopaths know that their mental strength can over-power the spineless administrator, thus they get away with cruel, sadistic behavior.

**This is applicable only to work situations. In romantic situations, it is true that some girlfriend/boyfriends need to be dumped. But you can do it in a nice way. So the above is mostly applicable to people in a job situation or in other social organizations.**

These rules are hard to learn and follow. If we begin teaching them in high school we can change the world beginning with the adolescents who will grow to be adults some day. Can we plan ahead five years? Are we capable of looking down the road five years and realize that 15 year olds will be the pregnant 20 year olds who are fighting with her boyfriends?

If we can look down the road five years, we will begin having classes in each and every high school in America. Show the world how to be the world we want them to be. Two brilliant psychologists Robert Peck and Robert Havighurst did a remarkable piece of research to discover how a teen's personality develops. Peck and Havighurst were interested in the moral character of the teens so they named their report [The Psychology of Character Development](#) published in 1960.

## The Philosophy of Remonstrance

The word remonstrance may be new to you. It means to confront someone in a gentle and mature way. (that's the definition I give it. A new definition for an old word.) It is a very important word because you have a need to confront someone who has hurt you. Psychologists say that, depending on how well you

remonstrate with your friend or family member, you will be mentally healthy; or at least the relationship will be healthy. And, if you are thinking about your family member, your family will be healthy. Robert Beavers said that if you have good communication between family members then your family will be healthy.

Let's begin with the physiology of stress. When someone is stressed their brain parts go into a sort of overdrive. This overdrive is not good for the body. There are many things a person can do to mitigate this stress. If the stress comes from a person, they can go to that person and express the pain and distress in a helpful way. Being able to do this allows the person to experience a decrease in uncomfortable thoughts and feelings which leads to a lowered experience of stress (Pennebaker, ex SMU professor.)

The 5 levels of the “YOU REALLY” technique

Describe what you see.

1. You are raising your arm

I see you walking to the liquor cabinet to get a drink.

Describe what feelings you are seeing

2. You are mad about this

3. You are mad or worried or anxious about something else.

Mild interpretation

4. You are really mad about something else and you're taking it out on me

I know you're really anxious when I leave town, isn't that right?

Deep interpretation

5. You were probably still angry at your mother and you're taking it out on me.

You're getting angry at me when the real person you're angry at is your boss because he's putting so much responsibility on you without giving you the authority you need to do the job.

**Each of these lines are used in specific situations that take years of practice to know when to use them and when not to use them. It is my hope you will learn to use each one wisely and judiciously because if you don't, this technique can backfire on you. Proceed with caution.**

Care taking the victimizer

In many scenarios in life the victimizer is coddled and protected. Once, when a group of doctors allowed egocentrism to take its course, I was terminated from my job. I had not been told of a primary reason until after the termination. I wanted to have an “Adult-Adult” conversation with them to find out more about what had happened. The HR person said “No, you can't talk to the doctors; that would be inappropriate.”

I am glad we have the word “inappropriate” in our language. It is a very useful word that can be applied to discern the poorest behavior. The word is used to connote an ethical basis for proper action between two or more persons. The interesting question is “how does one decide what is “ethical” and what is not. Or more appropriate, what is “more ethical” when two persons' ethics are in conflict. Where do ethics come from? The answer is simple. Ethics is (are) created out of the matrix or nexus of the pain generated in interpersonal behavior. There is not a code of conduct existing that does not have its basis in minimizing human suffering.

So, was my wanting to talk to the doctors “inappropriate” because it would have caused human suffering? No, it was “inappropriate” because it would have been annoying to the doctors to have taken time out of their schedule to talk to me. They would have had to have activated their social intelligence to deal with my questions and remonstrations and they weren't interested in doing that. And, furthermore, having known them, I can tell you they were not good at these social skills. The fact that I was upset about losing a very good job without being given the chance to learn about and improve my performance did not concern them. (One of the doctors lost his job 2 years later.)

It is very clear in this situation that the assessment of “inappropriate” was very influenced by the

power that doctors commanded. Once again, it was the amount of power that won the day, not the ethics of the behavior. Hence, I had to suffer in silence with no debriefing which is so important to the human mind and the maintenance of a healthy attitude.

### Recognize the 50/50 rule.

In any confrontation there is always a piece of both persons responsible for the conflict, misunderstanding, or departmental deficit. The entire field of family therapy is based on the systemic epistemology which says, “There is no one person to blame. All conflicts are systemic” meaning no one member of the group is the cause of the problem and no one is without a part of the causality equation. This is the postmodern concept of “multiple perspectives.” We all have to accept a little piece of this causality if we are to be effective problem solvers. This is extremely difficult for egopaths. Shaming and blaming is their stock and trade (and at the heart of most incidents of Workplace Incivility).

Therefore, the way to work with any employee or manager is to teach the 50/50 rule. This rule captures the need to look at one’s own behavior or shortcomings to be able to understand fully the others’ behavior and to understand how best to solve the problem at hand. If each meeting could begin with a comment, “Okay, guys, how am I at fault here? What can I do differently to help you guys be better at what you do?” This will completely relax the subordinates and raise their game to the highest possible level. After a supervisor gets that question out of the way, the subsequent fault-finding and directives will be taken with much more equanimity and acceptance by the staff.

In the case where it is not true that the manager is part of the problem, the willingness to ask the “50/50” question is the mark of a good leader. The subordinates will respect this approach and will be much more willing to look at where *they* are at fault and admit to the need to work on their shortcomings. The 50/50 technique is also a litmus test for egopaths. If a manager is absolutely unwilling to try such a thing, chances are you have an egopath on your hands.

Stealth. A cat is instinctively stealthy. All the cats, great and small, know how to wait quietly, moving slowly, and then strike their prey. To deal with an egopath one has to learn to wait with stealth, controlling the impulsive response. This is difficult because the behavior of an egopath inspires us at every moment to unleash the frustration and resentment full force into his/her face. But this would do nothing but distance the relationship. Show the egopath what high character is. Show him or her you can control your impulses. Listen to what they say. Be curious. Ask questions. Stay in your Adult ego state. Look for answers. Strive to attain a win-win solution.

So many of our responses to egopaths are premised on a false assumption. “If I answer directly what he/she is saying, THEN... They will hear my point of view and say, “Oh, I see.” And we will feel satisfied that we got our message across. But, alas, this never happens. But we keep beating them over the head with our message. Why don’t they hear me? Why won’t they understand how much their behavior is killing me? Answer: Because they are egopaths. They don’t have that mental ability. Give it up. The old adage, “You can’t hope to change them so you can only change yourself” is true. But what does that mean? It means you have to change your whole attitude about them. You have to develop a mature, understanding approach which transcends their personality and your natural reaction to it.

### Applying this to Relationships

I know I am asking a lot. When we fall in love we naturally feel “this person is my partner. He/she is a mature, caring human who will understand me and care about me.” But it is so often not the case. We can see that they don’t care. Don’t despair, the relationship is not doomed. But its survival depends on you giving up the notion, at least for a while, that this person is able to hear and care about your needs. Can you do that? I know it requires a lot of patience. You may need to find a therapist who can listen and understand while you go through the months and years of frustration. But it will be worth it if you want to preserve the relationship.

**The Dimensions of Egopathy (also in Chapter 3 “Egopathy”)**

It is interesting to see how an early 20<sup>th</sup> century person phrased this dynamic. In Psychology and The Promethean Will, William Sheldon (1936) he commented on several constructs and their seamless shading one into the other.

This is the term in which the normal and the pathological grade over into each other so gently that no adequate boundary can be made out between them (p. 252).

He also talks about how the personalities of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are very discontinuous.

“That is perfectly normal dissociation. But in the character of Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde, Stevenson has described a dissociation of so extensive a nature that one of the two dominate patterns is a genuinely uncivilized personality, while in the other almost the perfect antithesis is seen” (p. 253).

Most people have known someone who seemed to change personalities so quickly and so completely that the change inspired terror and disbelief. Most have wondered the question, “Why?” Most often the answer lies in childhood abuse. Mistreating children is such a natural event for overstressed and undereducated parents that it can happen constantly in our society, even today. It is amazing that this phenomenon is not presented more to the public. As a result, the abuse just goes on, year after year, decade after decade. “But how can we present parent education to the public?” you ask. Here’s the answer. Every child is sitting in a classroom ready to learn at the age of 14, about the age that they are thinking about love and sex. They desperately need a class in relationships, personality, and parenting. Sometimes this is called the “fourth R” after reading, writing, and ’rithmetic: “relationships.” Some enlightened souls might even call this fourth “R” the most important of all. And yet here we are in the new millennium and our legislators are not insightful enough to mandate that our children learn relationship skills which would include parenting skills.

In Texas in 2007, the legislature passed a bill mandating that Paternity, Parenting, and Relationships be taught in the health classes in high school. The 14 day program is called the p.a.p.a. program, paternity and parenting awareness.

And so, we trip along putting up metal detectors in our high schools and teach “disaster readiness” classes in our schools to prepare for that remote chance that some abused soul might go ballistic and bring a gun to school. When all along it would benefit everyone and greatly reduce the chances of a killer kid going “postal” if the schools would include a class in relationships for every 14 year old. (see Appendix X for a curriculum.) (green means this same paragraph is elsewhere as well, in “What do we do about it” )

This class would create a “consciousness” that would seep into the school’s collective unconscious. We are expected to create relationships which are healthy. We are expected to treat others with kindness and consideration. If we have a problem with our parents there is someone in the school who understands and is able to refer us to a therapist where we can work on this issue. This state of raised consciousness in the school would virtually ensure that the school would be free of violent incidents.

## How to TALK to an EGOPATH

Mark McCormack (1984) said, “Don’t go one on one with the boss. If you win the battle you’re probably going to lose the war. And the more right you are, the more damage it will probably do in the long run” (p. 80). (I had a supervisor tell me this one time when I was dealing with an egopathic professor. I continued to appeal the grade anyway. I lost the battle but I won the war. She was fired about a year later and I graduated. Why is it that professors and managers are so supportive of their egopathic counterparts? Is it elitism? “We are in power so we’re special and we need to support the other special people in the company against the lower class citizens in our midst.” Is that what they are thinking? McCormack went on to say,

We had a situation several years ago where one of our employees go into a heated exchange with his boss. One thing led to another, and the employee was asked to resign. This is a very unfortunate situation, and he asked to see me because he felt that once I knew all the circumstances of the dispute I might be willing to prevail upon his boss to reconsider. I told the employee that I would be happy to listen but that there was nothing I could do because my larger priority was supporting the management structure of the company. No matter *how wrong or intemperate his boss might have been*, that, unfortunately, was now a nonissue. The situation did not reflect well on this particular employee’s boss--but his boss still had a job (p. 80).

I wonder what McCormick would say today. This is a clear violation of the rules of creating a psychologically healthy workplace. Supporting management in this unilateral fashion sends a clear signal to the would-be egopathic actor. “You can do what you want and you will get away with it.” Not only does this set up an abusive situation for the employee, it ignores the need that the manager has for personal development and psychotherapy.

Talk in the third person. This can be tricky and should be used only by a skilled person, ie with much practice. If you can develop the “third person” mindset it will help with confronting an egopath. A “third person” mindset is recognizing that there is a “best way” to go about dealing with an employee. If you can get into a sympathetic mode with the supervisor you will be joining him in his/her search for the best possible set of actions for a successful outcome. But you are seeing that they are not behaving in the best possible set of actions. You can see they are being egocentric and they are interpreting and reacting to the situation with blinkers on, mono ally, and not really caring about how their behavior is affecting you. So when you see that happening you have to go into “third eye” mode and begin to look at the situation from their point of view.

This ability to step outside your own skin and emotional point of view and calmly and maturely interact is paramount in handling your boss.

gravitosterone

Best Practices

In every field there are books with the words “Best Practices” in the titles, HR is no different. There is “Best Practices in Human Resources.” You might ask the question, “Is this behavior/course of action recommended in “Best Practices in HR?” Your job is to get them to thinking “critically” about their behavior.

Understanding your Responses to an Egopath

In psychoanalytic literature there is much said about “counter transference.” Dr. Masterson defines it broadly as meaning “those emotions stirred in the therapist that interfere with the conduct of treatment” (p. 275).

Let’s leave “psychotherapy” behind for a moment and talk about your having to deal with the egopath in your life. Figure XX shows how controlling “countertransference” can be difficult according to the situation.

Figure XX: The Five Levels of Difficulty in Resisting Countertransference with an Egopath

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A stranger approaches you | very easy to stay unruffled |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| An acquaintance, a coworker, approaches you   | less easy but still can be handled well without too much effort   |
| A client, someone you worked with for years   | More difficult  |
| A very close person in your life, your spouse or child, someone you did not know as a child | Very difficult  |
| Your parent or sibling who can trigger feelings left over from childhood experiences        | The most triggering of all. These are people who reside very clearly and dynamically in your deepest psyche. (Hippocampus.) |

Of course, the next question is “How much unresolved pain do you carry and how close to the surface is it?” If you carry a great deal of unresolved pain and you do not have the personality to bury it, you may have just as much difficulty with strangers and coworkers as you do with members of your family.

### The "Describe What You See" Technique

So the freshly wounded victim of an egopath asks me, "What do you do with this pain, Cedric?" It was a fair question and one I wanted to answer. But there were no easy answers. One very difficult answer is, "You take it on the chin. You take it like a man or a woman." But that's just the first step. What does that mean? It means you don't rush to get back at them. To seek retribution is an egopathy act. You may be so hurt you don't care what anyone calls it, you are going to get the revenge you deserve. Fine. Go ahead. Keep adding pain to the world. That's what we need, more retributive pain. Is that what you want? After you get calm, I'm sure you will say, no. So what do you do? You activate your inner Adult.

### Transactional Analysis Revisited

The word "Adult" comes from Transactional Analysis. TA was created by Eric Berne, M.D. and promulgated by Thomas Harris, M.D. and has been spreading around the country since the 1960s. Hopefully, it's done the country some good. The "Adult" ego state is the part of you that is in control, is mature, and is looking for the best possible reaction you can give someone. How you react to any situation is *everything*. Whether in relationships or business, it doesn't matter, success is in the *reaction*.

So activate your inner Adult and ask yourself, "What is the most helpful and logical thing for me to do?" If you have an inner Adult you will most likely say, "I must go to that person and have an Adult-Adult conversation. We must work out our differences." If this sentence sounds totally goofy to you, chances are you're an egopath. Egopaths experienced a disruption in their character development somewhere along the way. When this happened, the person lost the ability to care about the other person's feelings and about maintaining warm relations with the target person. They will not be impressed with the concept of negotiating wisely, so that everyone can walk away a winner. Depending on their level of egopathy, their minds take them to a "win-lose" scenario almost every time.

### Describe what you see

When dealing with egopaths you have to go very slowly. One way to slow down is to describe what you see. This notion comes from the parenting literature and is full of wisdom. In the next section we will be talking about interviewing the egopaths.

There are three ways to describe what you see. Each level becomes less innocent in the sense that you are not allowing the target to fill in the blank. You are tossing an interpretation at them which could become dicey. This first attempt to quash a behavior is simply describing some behavior you are noticing.

1. Describe what you see. You are non-plussed, annoyed, rankled or jibber-jabbered and you don't know

what to say that will not lead to an argument. You say: "I am noticing that you are not passing the Kleenex box when I am crying." A wife might say: "I am noticing that the yard is not mowed."

2. Naming a feeling. "I see that you're very sad." "You are really mad about what I said yesterday."

3. Interpretation: "It looks like you are acting out your unresolved childhood needs issues."

Of course this is never done without a purpose. It is done to get the other person to stop, to apologize and/or correct their behavior. Therapists use it to encourage self-insight.

To have this technique work you must be genuinely interested and curious in the answer that the person will give. And that's the easy part. The difficult thing to do next is to *validate* the answer. This goes against our human nature. It is human nature to say, "NO. That is not right. You're back is NOT still hurting. You're just being lazy!" But the ADULT in us will say, "YES, I can understand that if your back is aching that you would not want to mow the lawn." This will send a message of empathy and caring to the target person.

I want to let the reader know that I understand how difficult this technique is if the husband is a chronic egopath who has mostly thought of himself and did his own thing for years. The reader will most likely want to scream "Horseshit! That won't work." I understand that this single technique will not change things in your relationship. Either, right away or to any significant degree. For things to change over time there must be an understanding of the systemic paradigm.

### The Systemic Paradigm

You've heard of hydrodynamics, aerodynamics, and physics. Basically, these are the rules that say when action A takes place, Reaction B will happen. This is no different in psychodynamics. When Person A does a given behavior, Person B will respond in a certain way. That is the law of human nature. So you have to decide, "Do I want to continue reacting automatically, the way I have for the last 20 years? Or do I want things to change in my relationship and in my life?" It's up to you because the "dynamics" laws are active in the next step on the equation. "As Person B changes her behavior, Person A will also change his."

The "Let Them Win" technique or "Oh, I See."

When someone is doing something that displeases you here is a tip on how to respond. This is also useful when you walk up to someone and say, "Do this, it needs to get done" and they give you a negative response. In either of these situations your natural response is to say, "Well, let's *git 'er done!*" That may be a funny punchline for a celebrated country comedian but it doesn't work on a day to day basis. It doesn't work, that is, to build or maintain a healthy relationship with the other person. The person responded in that "uncooperative" way because they have egoistic needs. Either they truly do have a reason to resist or they are resisting because their ego is having a shortfall and they need to shore it up a little. Either way they need you to have enough character to stall your own agenda long enough to *respond* to the target person. Responding, not just reacting, it is an art form and I want you to be good at it.

At the moment you hear the resistance know that there is a need in front of you. That need should cause you to shift gears in your mind and go into a "good guy" mode. And the best way you can "be there" for that person is to say, "Oh, I see" or some version of that. In that moment you can choose to become pushy, demanding, or even belligerent; it's up to you. (Footnote: "belligerent" is throwing words like cannonballs at the target person.) How will you choose to respond? If you choose "self" you will get pushy. If you choose "other" you will ask a question and listen.

### Before You Remonstrate

1. Think if the person is having a stressful situation at home or in his/her life. Be genuinely caring how stressful that can be. I once had a supervisor whose sister was dying of cancer. I had no idea about it so I may have had less understanding than I should have had.
2. Try to get on the same page with the person by establishing a mutual desire or goal. For instance, establish that we both want to create a “psychologically healthy workplace.” If your coworker or boss will agree that is a good goal, then you can express your disappointment in their behavior that decreased your sense of comfort and ease on the job.
3. Try to establish that some personal goal of their own was not served by what they had done to you (didn’t schedule you, didn’t take your feelings into account, and didn’t tell you their concern before going to the supervisor.)
4. Be ready to compliment them for any kind of improvement in their behavior. They crave that as much as you do! It will pave the way for a better remonstrations.