

- 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; A class in Parenting/Relationships in High School; a class in Developmental Personology in graduate schools.
- Chapter 17: The Vocabulary of Egopathy and High Character Communication
- Chapter 18: The Structure of Emotional Intelligence and Egopathy: The Diagrams, Figures, and Lists
- References

## Chapter 7: The Roots of Disempathy and Cruelty: The Developmental Personology of Egopathy

*If we do not fulfill the needs of our children, we predispose them to a narcissistic personality disorder.* Alexander Lowen, Narcissism, p. 188.

Why people do what they do is a question that has been asked for ages. The answers fall into two categories for the most part. The first answer encompasses some behaviors or attitudes which were engendered, influenced or decided upon in adulthood. The second answer is that there were influences and confluences in childhood which shaped the child's mind or psyche. This second reason, for me, is much more compelling. It's not that the first reason is not true. We *are* influenced by our context at the moment of our behavior, no doubt about it. But the truly insidious, malicious behaviors which we loathe have origins much deeper in the person's past. Let's look at some of the ways children are treated to get an idea of how this process takes place.

### The Early Years

### In Developmental Psychopathology

Are depressed children the victims or the initiators of negative social relationships? An ingenious study by Altamnn and Gotlib (1988) investigated the social behavior of depressed school age children by observing them in a natural setting: at play during recess. The authors found that depressed children initiated play and made overtures for social contact at least as much as did non-depressed children, and were approached by other children just as often. Yet, depressed children ended up spending most of their time alone. By carefully observing the sequential exchanges between children, the researchers discovered the reason for this. Depressed children were more likely to respond to their peers with what was termed “negative/aggressive” behavior: hitting, name-calling, being verbally or physically abusive” (p. 156.)

This research gives us a clue to the origins of egopathic behavior. “Hitting”, “name-calling”, and “being abusive” is the childhood version of adult cruel subterfuge. Although, I hear what you are thinking; these traits are also endemic in the adult world.

### Developmental Personologist

I consider myself to be the first developmental personologist. I remember the day I coined the phrase. I was driving home from Doctor’s Hospital after a day of work and the phrase came to me as I approached Mockingbird Lane near White Rock Lake. It was such a thrill to capture such an important area of study in a fresh phrase. I also knew I could now call myself by a name that described my true interest: “developmental personologist.”

Actually, there have been hundreds of developmental personologists over the years. Many men and women have studied “How adult and child personality develops from children experiences and relationships.” John Bradshaw comes to mind, also Block, Henry Murray, Alice Miller.

### Ego Expressiveness

The story mentioned above is an example of ego expressiveness. The children were not rude or abusive as some self-protective maneuvering necessarily. They were just expressing their naturally occurring ego structure. They were expressing (a.) what they themselves had experienced in their short lives, and(b.) what they felt. When one is unhappy or depressed, one tends to express negative emotion and behaviors. There is less volitional unconscious intention here than the psychoanalysts would have you believe. Many behaviors of the egopath simply spring from the childhood woundedness which remains in the soul (mind, psyche) which was never owned, expressed, or healed. (see figure XX; also see section xx in Chapter 4).

In childhood, [see the 5 boxes of Symptom/behavior Development (Figure xx)] we feel the direct pain of a wound for only a little while. However, we are encouraged not to feel those feelings at all! “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” we chanted as children. But the fact is that we do feel the pain even though it lasts for only a little while. Developmental psychologists tell us we continue to carry the woundedness into our adult life and, according to the shape and intensity of the wound, we act out and experience the sequelae of the wound in other maladaptive forms.

The word “maladaptive” is a useful word. It is misleading as because it suggests we could have dealt with the wound “adaptively.” Sure, if we had gone to therapy or talked about it and cried about it with our parents we could have healed the wound within the year. But my guess is that this healthy interaction happens one in a thousand of childhood wounds. The other 999 wounds go underground lying dormant until a. puberty, b. adolescence, c. young adult hood, or d. an intimate relationship triggers the wound. This is one of the great conundrums of life. We think we’ve forgotten or conquered some old childhood wounds and then POW it hits us in the face. However, we usually don’t realize where the symptoms are coming from. Many people are surprised and indignant that their unresolved childhood wounds are driving their adult dysfunction, depression, or anxiety. Even some psychiatrists don’t understand this phenomenon, amazing as they may sound.

A great conundrum is the confusion of the good and bad in the same human being. Why is it that a

person who can be so good at times, so creative in the moment, so metaphysical in the quiet of the evening, so charitable in the face of the needy masses, so moved by the sanctity of the mass, so multifarious, so beneficent in the light of the Christmas tree... but so maleficent at the drop of a hat?

How can it be, these combinations of magnificent and maleficent? One answer is that they are carrying the wound deep inside their psyche of some distant trauncil\* experience that they did not know how to mend or forget. So it fermented in their psychological gut waiting for some triggering event to bring it up again and be expelled.

### Parenting Against Egopathy

Many parents struggle with the task of parenting. You can see them every week on the TV shows Super Nanny and Nanny 911. These parents have called in to ask for help by the TV show because they are desperate for answers of how to raise their children and yet, apparently, they have not bothered to read a single parenting book. Amazing. Are people really that lazy? Apparently so. And then they don't want to take Nanny's advice! Such hubris! Well, it all works out well in the end when they apply the techniques and they work.

Is your child headed toward egopathy? How would you know? Is your child lying, stealing, throwing temper tantrums, bossing other kids around, not sharing, pushing, hitting, and disobeying the rules? These are the egopaths of tomorrow. What do you do?

Children and adults alike will act according to their "needsmet." As a child gets his or her needs met, they will relax and being to develop normally without "arrested development." They will naturally grow into mature and well-adjusted young people. Let's go over childhood needs.

First let's review what children don't need. I have made a list of all the types of poor parenting or life experiences which add to the child's negative basket of woes. The more negatives there are the more likely the child will begin to show signs of egopathy. Avoid doing or allowing these if it is at all possible. I captured all of them in one acronym: Trauncil-Copp.

The mistake that many parents make is that they see their children and blossoming into young adults naturally without intervention. All you have to do is to provide them with a home and food and soothe them whenever they get fussy and they'll grow to be mature and capable young people. Their developmental trajectory is set at birth and all the parent has to do is nurture them by directive words and soothing distractions when they get upset and everything will be fine. But that kind of thinking is completely erroneous. Children need much more than that. Love is not enough. Children need instructive interventions from the parents. And yet I will estimate that 80% of all parents in America lack the kind of skills that parents need to raise healthy, happy children. And yet we, the adults, are so uninsightful, we are still not mandating that our schools teach parenting skills to our sexually active teens. Which generation will step up to the plate and pass legislation mandating relationship and parenting classes for each student in every high school in America? Are the Baby boomers going to fail at doing this just as our forefathers have failed at it for thousands of years?

\*In 2007, Texas passed a bill requiring each high school student to learn about healthy relationships and proactive parenting in the required health class. Hats off to Texas.

### 10 Types of Childhood Maltreatment: TRAUNCIL

1. T stands for trauma or toxic shame. These two words are almost the same thing. Most of the trauma children experience could be from the toxic shame that they are exposed to coming mostly from the adults in their lives.
2. R stands for rejection. It is of utmost importance that parents decide if they want to become parents before the child is born. Once the child is born there is no room for rejection. Feelings of distancing are common in parents and this is normal. But the toxic decision to reject a child based on some misfortune is a situation so potent in the development of the child that it must be confronted and worked through by the parent. Ebenezer Scrooge's mother died at childbirth and his father decided to blame and reject the innocent baby. This rejection caused a lifetime of

suffering and created a toxic personality that lost all sympathy for those around him. We have Charles Dickens to thank for this brilliant portrayal of an egopath.

3. A stands for abuse and abandonment. There are the 5 abuses that are included: sexual, physical, mental, verbal, and as John Bradshaw says so aptly, “it’s all emotional abuse.” Abandonment can be literal or it can be figurative.

4. U stands for unloving or uncaring acts. These acts are the most numerous of the parenting behaviors and yet the most “benign.” They are often camouflaged and passed off as “loving behaviors” by well meaning but un insightful parents. These words are so damaging and yet are not called “abuse.” These are the common acts that a grown person will remember so vividly and of which the person’s parent has no recollection. They are Unsound parenting techniques, insensitive words, inconsistent discipline, inattentive behavior, inconsiderate gestures, and inexact instructions followed by retributions for “not doing it right.”

5. N stands for neglect. In the extreme form, no parental act is so devastating as neglect. Even abusive behavior is some sort of attention. But neglect, especially extreme neglect early in life, leaves the child permanently underdeveloped with a wounded sense of self that is impossible to repair. Depending on the circumstances, the child can grow and learn to love itself. But unfortunately, far too many children are not rescued in time and live out their lives without anyone who really loves them; leaving most of them vulnerable to lives full of depression or committing egopathic acts of cruelty.

6. C stands for chaos. There are many parents who are loving and caring but who do not realize the detrimental consequences of their chaotic lives on their children. The most toxic chaos is the bedlam created by alcoholism and drug abuse. When unpredictability of behavior is combined with the screaming and arguing, so common in these dysfunctional families, the children are destined to develop personality glitches which rob them of their serenity and their best selves.

7. I stands for indulgence. This is the one area in which the child would protest is not a problem area at all! But adults need to understand the detrimental consequences of giving too generously to a child, especially if it is motivated for the wrong reason, which is usually is. The parent often is trying to undo either some deprivation in the past or their own lack of love for the child. Sometimes it can be the attempt to buy the child’s love which is always inappropriate. Love is created through loving contact, not with purchases of toys or freedom from structure.

8. L stands for Loss. This is the most difficult situation for the parent to protect their child from. Loss of pets, loss of playmates, and loss of grandparents are common occurrences in a child’s life but they don’t have to be traumatizing. If the parent will validate the feelings and encourage the appropriate loss rituals, the child can grow past the loss.

And two more concepts I had to add:

9. CO stands for Controlling, Over-protective

10. PP stands for permissive parenting

CO stands for Controlling and Over-protective parenting. These parents are either projecting their own fears onto the child or they are projecting their own unmet self-development needs onto the child. They do not have a healthy attitude nor understanding of the importance of the child developing its own identity and career. Many adult victims of this kind of mistreatment will report, “I don’t know who I am,” or “I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up” even though they are 47 years old. As a child feels about and daydreams about his or her future, they are growing neurons which define the “sense of self.” If these daydreams are curtailed because their “dreams” are dictated to them, then they will have misconnected neurons which lead to an empty inner life and a tendency toward depression and suicidal thoughts.

PP stands for Permissive Parenting which is the opposite of the “CO” style of parenting.

In PP the parent takes little interest in the affairs of the child and lets them have much to much freedom to do whatever they want. This lack of involvement leaves the child feeling unloved and even unwanted. This parenting style also leads to depression and suicidal thoughts as an adult.

### The Story of Theodore Kaczynski

Egopaths are different from ego healthy people (altrucharacteristic) in a very crucial way: how they deal with their old wounds and how those old wounds were processed. The story of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, is instructive.

In the 1990's there were a number of professors who were getting killed and maimed when they opened letter bombs that would blow up in their faces. The culprit turned out to be an ex-Harvard professor named Ted Kaczynski. All egopaths and psychopaths have something in common, they all have had a life changing experience when they were young. "Anti-social" psychopaths (those that have a history of criminal behavior), usually, have experienced a long history of TRAUNCIL (see above.). These experiences soul-damaged the child and he or she became jaded and resentful. In the case of Ted Kaczynski, it seems a single, circumscribed event caused significant damage to the psychological structure of his brain. The experience changed his brain structure so radically that years later he became the jaded, resentful, judgmental man who thought it would be a good idea to fight "technology" by killing professors at universities who taught technological classes. I have no doubt that he experienced rejection and judgment at Harvard University by fellow professors who did not understand the developmental process of his psychopathology. This did not help.

Kaczynski moved away from the city to an isolated cabin and began making bombs to send to people he held responsible, symbolically, for his horrific fears and childhood torture. What was this single crucible event? At the age of 6 months he developed a rash which worried his mother. He was taken to the doctor and they decided to study the little boy and his unusual rash. He was sequestered at the hospital away from his mother for two weeks and at times pinned down on a table so the photographer could get a well-lit, clinical picture of the rash.

Somewhere in this highly intelligent little boy's mind he had been utterly abandoned by his mother and his family. He was taken from the warmth and safety of his home and placed in the hands of perfect strangers who were cold and clinical. His mother reported in the newspaper article, "He was a lively, bouncing baby boy when he was taken but when he returned home he was lifeless like a dishrag." Clearly, little Ted had experienced an emotional trauma that he was too young to express in words. That emotional trauma was stored away in his little brain even though he had rebounded and became a "normal" little boy again. There was an incident that revealed this stored trauma. He and his father were out hunting and they came upon a rabbit that was pinned down in a rabbit trap. Little Ted went ballistic begging for his father to release the rabbit. Did Kaczynski re-experience the feelings of being tied down to a cold table, helpless and alone, and experience a "recapitulation" of the terror all over again? The amygdala, according to Joseph LeDoux, is the powerful seat of emotional memory in the brain that had captured the complex emotions and sensations from his two week hospital ordeal. In a fierce moment of memory, Teddy K.'s brain was flooded with the terror and confusion he'd felt years before as a 6 month old child although he most likely had forgotten it.

In Ted Kaczynski's case we see a clear event with devastating consequences. He went on to experience a "delayed effect" of the ordeal and began to lose touch with reality. He was flooded with the need to get revenge on the people who had abused him. In his highly intelligent but damaged mind he calculated that he could strike a blow in the name of "good" by fighting the "bad" of technology and those that taught it, hence, the mail bombs he sent to the professors. (See page XX for more on dichotic thinking)

How do people who have experienced multiple insults to the mind (heart, psyche) try to absorb and digest this trauma? Math plays a role. Imagine the insults being counted and stored. These insults mount up and do not lose potency. What happens is they lose "immediacy." They are not immediately available to influence the victim's mood or behavior. However, they retain their power or potency to influence the mood *at a later time*; usually at times of loss or stress. This "delay effect" is a constant source of confusion for the lay person and even the trained therapist.

John Bradshaw appeared out of nowhere on the PBS stations in the late 1980's with his message of healing the wounded inner child. The interest in his ideas, books, and TV shows swept the nation. As a

student in Clinical Psychology it was suggested I read his book “On the Family.” It completely made sense to me and I proceeded to tape all of his PBS specials not once, but twice.

John Bradshaw drew heavily from writers who had gone on before him. He made no secret of this and even named his mentors and their books in his lectures. He proposed two basic ideas that were new to most of his viewers. They were (a.) the wounded inner child, and the notion of where it came from; and (b.) toxic shame. To the psychologically minded person this rang true and we all sought a support group that encouraged us to hold stuffed animals and express out emotional pain. I’m sure that each of us who went through the 10 week program benefited from it. But many people who are not psychologically minded found Bradshaw to be pompous and untrustworthy. These complaints continue to make no sense to me. I think some day John Bradshaw will be revered by the majority of the population.

In my mind John Bradshaw was the third in a “late century” series of giants. First came Anton Mesmer in the late 1700’s. Mesmer set the stage for his participants to feel their deepest angst and pain. He had no idea where this pain was coming from. He thought he was tapping into “animal magnetism.” But it worked for many members of Parisian high society and he was the toast of the town for years. But the local medicos didn’t like the attention, not to mention the money Mesmer was siphoning off their patients who were seeking relief from their symptoms. Doctors tend to be egopaths (see chapter 9) and the French were no different. They held an inquest and ruled that there was no proof of “animal magnetism” and that Mesmer, therefore, was a fraud. His influence waned and he eventually left Paris and died a nearly forgotten man in his homeland, Austria.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century came Sigmund Freud, another Austrian, one hundred years later. He was experimenting with a latter-day form of Mesmerism; hypnosis. He would put the patient in a deep trance and ask questions about their history, personal life, and symptoms. Freud soon gave up the hypnosis and allowed the patient to go into a much lighter state of mind and “free associate,” letting whatever memory come to the mind that came. The patient would remember childhood abuse and through this remembering and telling of the unearthed story, he/she would be relieved of their intractable symptoms.

And then, one hundred years after Freud, a third brilliant innovator arrived on the scene to utilize the hypnotic trance to help his patient/clients feel deeply again the childhood pain that robbed them of their happiness and mental health. John Bradshaw would play the most moving background sounds and music to help his seminar attendees relax and remember how they had been toxically shamed and humiliated as children. The flood of emotion that some participants felt surprised them because they thought they had long ago forgotten old wounds from childhood. But the brain is a powerful computer which has a huge amount of “memory” which never forgets the pockets of emotional pain which are created when a parent or caregiver throws hurtful barbs of displeasure and disparagement at the helpless child.

Now back to the idea that math is involved. You add up the number of insults to the mind and if the number reaches a certain level, then irreparable damage has been done. The three ways of assessing the damage are 1. Intensity of the abuse; 2. Frequency of the abuse; and 3. Duration of the abuse or how many months or years did it go on?

### The Influence of the Environment

Although egopathy has its formative roots in childhood, the mind set also is influenced by the state of the current environment. Because of this, many theorists surmise that egopathy, or any behavior, is created completely from the current environment.

Bob is generally a nice guy but the new boss at his manufacturing plant is a real stickler for details. Even when Bob tries to be accurate, Glenn finds something to criticize. Slowly, Bob begins to feel the effects of the constant criticism. He stops sleeping well, he gets grouchy, his kids start acting up, his wife becomes less affectionate all of which cycles back and feeds into Bob’s bad mood. He develops Irritable Bowel Syndrome to match his mood. Because of this downward spiral Bob makes a few innocent gaffs on the job which Glenn notices with relish. As Bob tries to adjust and deal with Glenn’s behavior, he becomes harsh and unpleasant himself with his supervisees. He becomes an egopath himself. This is very annoying to Bob because he has a vague notion that it is Glenn’s criticism and kibitzing that began

the downward spiral in the first place. And yet there is nothing he feels he can do about it. He tries to complain to Glenn's boss and to HR to no avail. Both the boss and HR are dedicated to support their managers. There is a "se la vie" attitude which leaves Bob feeling helpless and hopeless. Furthermore, Bob senses that the boss and HR were even acting suspicious as if he were the one who needs to be watched! So it is a double whammy. Not only are his needs ignored but now there is further worry that his complaint is now causing him to appear to be either a complainer (nobody likes a complainer) or a psychotic (imagining things that aren't real.)

This is the sad reality of 10 billion homes and work situations around the globe. And yet very few of the victims can go to the parent or boss and remonstrate with the egopathic boss. The notion that people have a need to speak their mind and confront what the boss or parent is doing or saying is a notion that has not been accepted by a vast majority of humans in this world. It is difficult to imagine the amount of damage this does to the people who populate planet Earth. Being able to remonstrate with a hurtful person is a basic human need and when it goes unmet there are devastating results.

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