

Chapter 3: Egopathy: What is it and how does it work?

The Egopath Motto: Since you deserve it, my reaction cannot be considered mistreatment!

Egopathy is an attitude and a behavior which wounds another person. The willingness and the drive to be cruel or hurtful to another person is one of the most common drives or tendencies in a human being. It begins with most children as toddlers when another toddler takes his toy. The reaction is anger and the need for revenge.* Hitting or a hearty, “No, that’s mine” is the beginning of egopathic acting out.

As the child grows these incidents of egopathy will multiply or diminish all depending on the child’s environment. If the household is calm and full of joy or if the parent has read a parenting book or two, the child will leave behind these tendencies to react harshly. However, if the household is frequently chaotic and angry or the parent does nothing or reacts harshly to the behavior, then the behavior will continue and intensify.

As children grow they learn that egopathic acting out is usually not acceptable. They begin to be clever in ways of hiding their behavior so they won’t get caught. This is when clandestine maneuvering is born. This attitude of “it’s okay if you don’t get caught” is at the low level of moral reasoning according to Jane Loevinger. Her work on “ego development” is a clear indication that not all children, or adults, or operating at the same level of moral, or “ego,” development. The person at the higher level of ego development truly wants to do “the right thing.” But those at the lower levels of ego development are only interested in not getting caught or doing the right thing in order not get caught. (see the section of Jane Leovinger in chapter SEVEN: The Roots of Disempathy.

*Remember that the more the parents have hit the infant baby or neglected it, the more likely the baby will be aggressive with his playmates.

What is “Ego?”

Before we talk about egopathy or ego development we have to understand what “ego” means. The word ego is used in two basic ways in the literature. One is the psychoanalytic way which places it functions as the mediator between the “id” and the “superego.” The id is the part of the person that pulls him/her toward satisfying his hungers, needs, and instincts. The id says, “if it feels good, do it.” The superego is the part of the person which remembers lessons from youth and knows that society expects him/her to “do the right thing.” The superego pulls at the ego to make decisions about a course of action which will result in the best possible outcome for all concerned. “Be considerate, be kind, be on your best behavior,” is the admonition of the super-ego.

In Harry Levinson’s book “On the Psychology of Leadership,” ego is defined as “the organized executive function of the personality, those functions that have to do with

self-control and with testing reality.”

The second use of the word “ego” is the one most often used by people in our society. “He has such a big ego,” is heard by a disappointed blind date. “He let his ego get in the way,” is heard by a critic of the previous CEO of the company. “Ego” in these examples means “the part of us that is looking to get the best for ourselves, keeping what has been gained, and disregarding the needs of others in the process.” This second definition is the one most closely aligned with the word “egopathy.” “Pathos” is the Greek word for “illness” or “dysfunction.” Combine the two and you get egopathy.

The egopathic person has been wounded in childhood and never really healed or worked through the abuses, losses, or chaos that was endured during those growing up years. In the course of the child’s development, a healthy ego was not allowed to develop which left the person with an underdeveloped ego. (see the section of Jane Loevinger’s “ego development.”) When people behave badly, it is almost always because the person is filled with some emotion or compulsion that was formed during the growing up years. The selfish or “egocentric” behavior is a way of expressing or “acting out” that emotion which has a component of “compulsiveness” (I can’t stop myself). These compulsions are the psychological sequelae (stuff that are the result) of unhealthy development. When a person feels the compulsion to *aggressively* seek out a need or *callously* satisfy a drive, we see this as “acting out” the unmet needs of childhood. When the acting out behavior includes “moving aggressively”* we will call it the “egopathic drive.”

*We owe Karen Horney a debt of gratitude for her phrases “moving against, moving away from, and moving toward.” (Horney, 1937)

The word “ego” has a long and varied past. It is a word from the Greek language that was used when Ernest Jones translated Freud’s word “ich,” the German word for “I.” It can also be used to mean “the self.” In 1890, William James said there were two “selves,” one called the “I” and the other called the “me.” James was one in a long line of philosophers who tried to understand a person’s attitude or “sense” of their own self. This is an important concept because to understand egopathy one must understand how the self becomes separated into “multiple selves.” Sometimes two of these are called the true self and the false self.

Multiple Selves

There are five steps or stages we must walk through to understand this concept of multiple selves. The first step is to understand how, in early childhood, the self of the child is being formed. The child develops a healthy sense of self or an unhealthy sense of self based mostly on how his mother or father reacts to or treats the toddler. There are countless stories of adults with poor self-esteem, or insecurity, or a high self-doubt which can be traced back to his early childhood experiences.

The second step is to understand the ego defenses. Please, before you close the book, try to bear with me. This may seem unusual at first but if you’ll stay with me you will come to understand this simple concept. We humans are very smart and we learn how to manipulate our words or actions in order to minimize, even avoid, any hurtful reactions from others. You all know about the child who says, “I didn’t do it,” right after breaking the lamp. He is wise and has figured out that if he lies about what he did, he may

avoid being punished for his reckless behavior. This is just the beginning of a long string of words or actions which are designed to protect the little boy's "self" from harm, be it physical (a spanking) or emotional (being yelled at.)

The third aspect we will be covering is the idea of engaging in ego defensive maneuvers to get something that you want. This is called a drive and as you can see in Diagram 3; this is a primary need along with fear. We have a natural tendency to drive toward a goal, to get something we want. We also have fears. In the beginning, these fears are natural and healthy. We drive the speed limit, put on a seatbelt, wash our dishes, and take our medicine all in an attempt to keep safe or heal our bodies. Engaging in ego defensive behavior is just one more way of trying to keep safe.

The fourth aspect is that sometimes things go wrong in childhood and we don't get the love and nurturance we need. This leads to insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1960) which simply means we did not get the kind of loving relationship we needed from our mother, father, or primary caregiver. If we have the experience of being securely attached while we were growing up, we will be much more likely to develop a strong sense of self. There have been many writers who have explained this process and each one used a different set of words to describe this mental growth.

Ego development (Loevinger), ego differentiation (Bowen), ego integrity (Erickson), ego strength (Barron), and emotional intelligence (Goleman.) vs. evil (Zimbardo).

The egopath can be understood through the lenses of all the great psychological writers. If we study Carl Rogers' book, Client-Centered Therapy, we would say that the egopath is a person who looks at the world through his own "internal frame of reference." This tendency comes about as a result of not being able to accept one's "self." What Rogers does not say is that the inability to accept one's self comes from the inability of one's parents to accept the child during the growing up years.

Abraham Maslow actually referred to "the egopath" in concept if not by name. In "Eupsychian Management" he introduces the "charming sociopath." Maslow does not go into how this person becomes this way or how to help the person come out of this frame of mind or egostate.

How do you decide if a person is an egopath or not? The problem is that every egopath is different. Thomas Widiger is working on "dimensions" for a good reason. There is more clinical usefulness and accuracy in the describing the person in this way (as opposed to the categorical way). I am offering to you a hypothesis and trust that someone in the audience will sense its value and do the factor analytic research. If it were done I believe it would work out like this.

There are about 50 traits that make up egopathy. Many are the same as psychopathy but some are not.

A person in question would be scored on each trait according to 3 criteria which I will call the "magnitude" scores.

1. Frequency
2. Intensity
3. Duration (or Chronicity)

(This is also the way to assess the level or “significance” of abuse behavior by an egopath or anyone, for that matter.)

Egopathy, what is its Place in Business?

You may have read the article in business magazine, “Fast Company” entitled “Is Your Boss a Psychopath?” If you did, then you have an introduction to what egopathy is. Egopathy is the willingness and tendency to mistreat others without restraint, guilt or remorse. That’s the short definition. Here’s the more complete definition.

Egopathy is the expression of unhealed childhood trauma (or some sort of trauncil) in the form of manipulation, control, aggressiveness and abuse upon a target person or some entity (such as a company or country) as a form of ego defensiveness or expressing the maldeveloped ego.

What is “Non egopathic” behavior?

In a landmark study reported in a book entitled Elmstown Youth, Hollingshead studied the youth of Elmstown, Illinois. But it was two researchers, Robert Peck and Robert Havighurst who brought the research to life. These two researchers spoke about “ego strength” in a way many readers had never heard before. They said ego strength was “a complex of capacities to react to events with accurate perception, appropriate emotions, and insightful, rational judgment; all proceeding from a well-integrated personality system.” They went on to say, “This system permits autonomous behavior, and at the same time it includes a *positive, ethical attitude toward other people.*” This is a good description of the “non-egopathic personality!” I call this the “AltruCharacteristic” personality.

Other hints at this construct include Carl Rogers calling a person “open to experience” who was high functioning after experiencing therapy. It seems the researchers of “The Big Five” personality traits borrowed this phrase when naming the personality traits of these significant five personality trait grouping. “Open to experience” has been shown to correlate highly with intelligence, creativity, and spontaneity. In fact, in the Peck and Havighurst research it was found that their construct “spontaneity” was correlated not with low morality alone, just as they thought, but with high morality, as well. Spontaneity had a curvilinear relationship with moral character. It appears spontaneity can be a part of an acting-out tendency *and* part of a healthy freedom to behave outside a rigid, structured mode of living.

Developmental Personology

Most non-professionals (and many mental health professionals) do not have a clear idea of how the human mind works relating to developmental personology, nor how the adult personality develops from the childhood experience. This is what Blood, Sweat, and Tears meant by their album title “Child is Father to the Man.” The childhood experiences create the adult who comes later.

There have been countless references to this phenomenon over the centuries yet there are perfectly intelligent human beings living today who do not factor in this reality when they deal with their social environment. My cousin once said he saw a young lady who had tattoos and multiple body piercings and said with disgust, “She wants people to look at her so I did. I stared at her.” When I said, “You know, Tom, people who mutilate

their bodies to that extent have about a 99% chance they were sexually abused, or abused in some way.” He became pensive and said, “Really?” It doesn’t seem to come easy to humans to carry that “developmental” factor in their heads when dealing with strangers, coworkers, or even their own spouse. Amazingly, parents have a very poor record of holding this understanding in their minds when dealing with their own children. This parental denial of personal responsibility for the child’s bad behavior is the “megathon confoundation” (normal words can’t describe its malevolent influence on humankind) of parent-child relationships. The more egopathic the parents, the more they will deny personal responsibility for shaping the child’s maldeveloped acting-out behaviors. (* That is not to say there are not cases where the child’s behavior is an aftereffect of incidents of abuse outside the family which can’t be blamed on the parents.)

One day a family came into my office due to excessive arguing and the teen was ready to run away. The parents were complaining that she was not listening to their advice or wishes. It came out that the mother had started throwing plates of moldy dishes she’d found in her daughter’s room. These plates were disgusting to her so she went into a rage. Her daughter’s behavior was despicable but how much could the mother accept that her daughter’s misbehavior was a function of *her interactions* with the daughter over the years. Blaming is seldom a healthy way to create a relationship with a child.

Egopathy

The word “ego” is generally believed to have been popularized when Sigmund Freud needed to describe the inner self of the human being. However, I found a letter from the writer of the Declaration of Independence to John Adams saying he was an “egotist” of the first order. Ego basically means “the self” or “the I” in Greek. Freud actually used the German word for I, *Ich* in the title of his book “The Ego and the Id.” Yet, ego psychologists continue to try to explicate exactly what “ego” means and explain its uses even today. In 1890, William James divided the ego, or “the self,” into two parts. One part he surmised was the acting-on-the-world ego, the I, and the other was the “self that was observed,” or “the me.” He wanted to differentiate the “I” that just acted instinctively and the “me” that a person is able to be aware of or observe.

In the APA dictionary

Egopathy:

“Hostile behavior due to a psychopathically exaggerated sense of self-importance. Egopathic patients are characterized by a strong egocentric trend that compels them to deprecate others in their constant aggressive and unconceding attitude.”

Five Levels toward Egopathic Behavior

Level One, Non-egopathic Level

1. Kind, caring, considerate, compassionate, patient. People love us in this mode.

Level Two, Non-egopathic Level 2

2. Personality expression. Not as a reaction to anyone in particular. We are just being ourselves. Level Two is the way our family and friends start to experience us after a while of being close or after a while of being married. It is a combination of increased sensitivity and increased laxity in social graces (learned social responses.)

Level Three, Mild Egopathy Level 3

3. Usually a reaction to some annoyance. These behaviors may appear at times of stress, frustration, or deprivation or they may spring from inner turmoil of the past with a retributive feel, i.e. recapitulative. Having power in a work setting or in a living situation increases the risk of behavior spiking into level 3 and 4.

Level Four, Significant Egopathy Level

4. Personality disorders behaviors. Faulty 'if ... then' thinking or even disordered thinking, cruel, egocentric behaviors. Although this level is "egopathic" the victims feel that the behaviors are those of a sadist since they feel so cruel.

Level Five, Sadistic P.D. or Psychopathy

5. Sadistic, cruel, behaviors such as aggression, torture, or murder. This is the stuff of psychopathic and sadistic personality disorder.

Diagnosing the Egopath

Diagnosis of egopathy is very important and not all that important, all at the same time. Let's take a look at the issues surrounding diagnosis.

Once a person is diagnosed does that mean they can never get better?

Can a person be "egopathic" and not be diagnosable with "egopathy?"

There is a conundrum around these questions. A vast majority of therapists and psychologists believe a person with a psychological illness can improve with the right treatment. If a person does improve with either therapy or with well-planned limit and boundary setting, then the question has to be asked, "Was there really a bona fide diagnosis present in the first place?" I am asking this because "egopathy" is similar to "psychopathy" in that the person generally never grows out of their compulsive need to be egocentric and to be in control.

Concerning the second question, I believe a person can be in an "egopathic" state of mind during time of great stress and emotional deprivation. This person never loses the capacity to return to being a caring and other-oriented person. But during their time of stress and emotional deprivation they have constant irritability, impatience, and aggressiveness. This can be called "egopathic acting out" although the person may not be a classic "egopath."

The Characteristics of a “Classic Egopath”

This book is about both the “dyed in the wool” egopath and the person who is going through such a tough time that he or she loses their ability to have “ruth” and, in the end, become a “temporary egopath.”

Module #5 The Three Habits of the Ineffective Egopath

Egopaths experience the world around them differently than you and me. They tend to take in what they see and change it or put a spin on it which creates meaning for them. They do this in three ways.

1. They will infer what is going on with the target person. They hear about or see behavior and they will figure out in their minds “what is really going on.” Unfortunately, they are notoriously inaccurate in their guessing game. Since they do not know their own self very well, they have very little healthy-ego sense of how a person functions and, therefore, will be very poor at guessing what is going on with another person. But this doesn’t stop them from feeling that they are masters at it and are 100% correct. When they are given feedback about their assessment from the target person, it does very little to affect their interpersonal attitude.

2. The second habit of highly ineffective egopaths is to decide what was done in the presented scenario. They may listen to another person’s description of the behavior if *they* were not actually present themselves; and they may even ask the target for a summary of the events. They may seem interested but this asking behavior feels to the egopath like they are actually in the Adult ego state and are actually giving the target a chance to explain him/herself. The egopath feels like he or she is really listening and considering the point of view of the target which is, of course, the only fair thing to do. Right?

But sadly, in the end, it comes to full light that the egopath has long since decided exactly what the target had done and how he or she needs to be dealt with and is unswayed by any denial or protestations to the contrary.

3. The third habit is to decide in their own mind what it is that the target needs to do differently. The egopath has the “answer” to the problem and is full ready to lay the brilliant and astute plan at the feet of the frail and disillusioned sad sack of a target.

These behaviors are completely invisible to the target. If the target notices them and protests with a comment such as, “You are not even curious as to how I think I might get myself out of this mess,” he will be greatly disappointed by the egopath’s response. The egopath by and large will be unable to hear the sentiment in this comment and will be unmoved to retract a statement or lend a sympathetic ear. Egopaths lack the flexibility of spirit and sentiment to really care about the other person’s drives, desires, and needs. For the egopath it’s all about getting one’s OWN drives, desires, and needs met.

Astronomers have long used “none direct optical observation” to learn about distant stars. They have developed technology that helps them understand the composition of the stars that are millions of light years away. They used a spectrometer (detecting the colors in the

spectrum). Through this method they can infer what metals the planet is made up of. In this same way we can watch egopaths interacting and infer what is going on inside them.

When Egopathy turns out to be “good”

The great Hawaiian chieftain, Kamehameha, is revered today as the first great leader of a united Hawaiian people. But how did he wrest power from the other chieftains back in the early 1800s? He ruthlessly ran them down and forced them to fall or jump off a cliff to their deaths. What a nice way to gain power. But *power* he did gain which afforded him the chance to lead his people to prosperity and his family to prominence.

Egopathy is something that is hard to pin down because, at times, it seems to be such a force for “good.” For instance, Mr. Mulholland was the head of water supply for the city of Los Angeles in the 1930’s. He decided to be a hero and take his job very seriously. He realized that there would be plenty of water for the burgeoning city of Los Angeles if the water from the North could be rerouted to the city using giant water tubes. There was only one problem. The water was being used by the inhabitants of the Valley far to the northeast to grow rich peach and apple orchards. Mulholland had his eye on their water and decided to capture that water for the greater good of Los Angeles. He sent men up in the dead of night to begin building a canal to carry the valley’s precious commodity to the thirsty City of Angels. But the men, mainly Mulholland, were no angels. The water dried up the valley and farmers of the San Joaquin Valley were powerless to fight the city for their water. Their crops perished and their homes and land values plummeted. All their hard work to build their community was destroyed. Fifteen men and women committed suicide. Mulholland didn’t care. He just wanted the water and the adulation that it brought his way.

Can there be a debate as to what is "good" egopathy? Is there such a thing? For that debate to take place the concept of "egopathy" needs to be in place, the self-serving drive to move against another person or group of persons in order to secure power or resources for yourself and for one's own people. I will not pretend to solve this conundrum here in these pages. But I am willing to offer the concept of egopathy to those who want to pursue the discussion.

The difficulty of the terminology

The word “egopathy” describes the whole process of being judgmental, thinking of ways to retribute, feeling no empathy for the victim, and feeling a sense of self-satisfied well-being after a sadistic act.

The Six Reasons Egopathy is allowed to exist with impunity

1. We don’t recognize it as a sickness.
2. We know it won’t help to confront it.
3. We are literally afraid for ourselves.
4. We know no one will understand or support us.
5. We love or respect the person and can’t imagine going against the powerful person. We

have a natural human tendency to think in terms of a dichotomy. Is this person “good” or “bad?” We decide to go forward as if he/she is good.

Confronting Your Parent

These children know that they cannot have a heart to heart chat with their parents. They tried and it didn't work. They most likely got innocent stares that said, “What are you talking about? We never acted like that.” They walk away feeling abused and disregarded all over again. They may even have asked themselves, “Am I crazy that I remember that behavior?” or “Is there something wrong with me?”

The second way the parent might respond is much more like the psychopath. The psychopath cannot and will not allow anyone to talk bad about him. He is completely unable to speak in a rational, self-reflective manner like you or me. The brain of a psychopath is wired to protect "the self" at all costs and “talking about my behavior” feels to the psychopath like death itself. It just cannot happen. It seems dangerous to their very soul. Sadly, there are millions of people who are not psychopaths and yet have this same inability to process their behavior with their loved ones. And so the profound injustices or maltreatment goes unspoken and unrevealed, sometimes until after the person is gone. Then the truth can come out.

Alexaccountability

If you have a loved one who seems to be unable or unwilling to talk about the conflict or brouhaha that happened last month, most likely you are dealing with an egopath. This inability to talk about and “process” what really happened needs to have a name. Without a name it cannot be talked about with accuracy and it cannot be researched. The name I would like to give it is “alexaccountability.” The term covers two bases. One, it says the person cannot speak an “account” of their behavior. They literally have a brain-centered log jam much like a person who has alexithymia (see page xx). They just can't talk about their behavior because their brain cells fire and in such a way that almost causes a seizure of sorts. They do not have the brain connections like you and me that allow us to “reflect” on our behavior and discuss with another person. (more about this in Chapter 4 under the Personality Disorders)

Secondly, it resonates with the term “accountability” which means “the ability to admit to and regret hurtful or inappropriate behavior.” The person with “alexaccountability” seldom can be “accountable” for what he has said or has done because it just feels so uncomfortable. (See chapter XX to learn more about the trauma that causes this mental dysfunction.)

This inability to talk about one's behavior is a rigid and deeply engrained "cortical mosaic" in the maldevelopment of the brain. It seems they are unable to talk about their behavior in any insightful way. This “self-awareness” or “self-assessing” is something terrifying to them. They don't feel it as “terror” but it is felt just as deeply as terror so they avoid it at all costs. They will lash out in aggressive disparagement at the confronter.

This tendency can be seen in children. It is common and yet it has no name. I was working with “Jason,” a delightful young man who could have been a poster boy for “charming, attractive youthfulness.” His mother had smoked when she was pregnant with him. His troublesome behavior ruined his parents' pure enjoyment of such a delightful

child. He would fight with his brothers, retreat into a morbid depression when he didn't get his way, and create havoc in the classroom at school. When he would come into my office he would be full of youthful, fun energy. But when his father tried to get him to settle down and talk about his behavior he would do one of two things to avoid it. Usually, he would see some object on the shelves and rush over to it with a squeal of delight. As his father would ask him to talk about some incident, he would say, with perfectly performed affection, "I love you, Daddy," and try to get a hug. If his father was in the mood to set boundaries he would say, "Jason, we need to talk about what happened" and Jason would fall back into the chair with a depressive, irritable demeanor. He literally was unable to react to a remonstrative comment with equanimity. His brain couldn't handle it.

This retreating from processing the incident or "alexaccountability," means "being without words for an account of what happened or what I did." I am borrowing, of course, from the word "alexithymia" which means "without words for feelings." It seems appropriate to borrow from this word since the two constructs are highly correlated. A person who has a hard time expressing his feelings (low emotional intelligence) will be "at risk" for having a hard time talking about his behavior. The presence of the one is an "indicator" or "marker" for the other.

The egopath who has power has an especially hard time talking about his or her behavior. After all, they are the bosses or the senior person (a parent or big sister or brother). They should be telling you about *your* behavior, not the other way around. The egopath has no natural ability to be magnanimous. They are all about protecting and empowering themselves! "Egomaniac" is a word that can be applied to some egopaths. Even when an egopath defers to a target, it's often done with slimy sarcasm.

The List That Describe the Nature and Habits of the Egopath

The Five Levels of Egopathy

1. This is the mildest form of egopathy. I am not sure if there exists someone who is even "nicer" than level one. I think this level includes all of us who are not egopaths. We care about other's feelings and strive each day to be fair and equitable.
2. This level is the first level in which there is a problem. This person is going through some tough times and is feeling irritable and bossy.
3. This is the first level in which the person is ruthless and mean. Yet even this person can feel remorse and come to their senses if they are confronted (remonstrated with) in a positive tone.
4. This level person is most likely does not possess the ability to discuss their personality traits and to change their behavior. If this person is living in an especially distressful set of circumstances, he or she could take the final plunge and cross the line into Level 5 egopathy. It is difficult to know when a person's narcissism in level 4 crosses the line into Level 5 malignant narcissism. We must try to work out some criteria.
5. Level 5 egopathy is final stage of the journey to evil. This level consists of psychopaths, sociopaths, and other cruel and uncaring narcissists.

The Angry Egopath

The angry egopath is probably one of the best known. You will find him or her

explicated in many books from Theodore Millon's "explosive" and "aggressive" types to the angry person in Shadow Syndromes. (The Anti-social)

The Manipulator Egopath

This person is the most like a psycho/sociopath/narcissist. He is not so devious and scheming as a sociopath but his spouse, children, and business associates have all felt the sting of his deception and manipulation at one time or another. These people are also the predators. They have an agenda of personal pleasure, power, or dominance that they adhere to although they do not express that up front and in honesty, in most cases.

The Borderline/Bipolar Egopath

The Borderline Personality Disordered person is definitely egopathic. But let's suppose there are people who are too high functioning, too "normal" to have a diagnosis of a personality disorder. They still seem to have "something" that is not right. That something is emotionality and judgmentalness. Borderline/Bipolar, "BB," egopaths are always on the lookout for someone doing something wrong. "You're not doing it right. Here let me do it" is a common sentence of the Borderline/Bipolar type of egopath. They have a great deal of difficulty relaxing and just letting things flow. They can't let people just be themselves. They have to notice how their loved ones or employees are doing something incorrectly or unattractively. They have a small "circle of acceptance."

If you don't fit into what they think is the right, appropriate, or a smart way of doing things, then you can't be trusted. To further the misery the BB will often have an agenda that will make her happy or suit her long range plans. She or he will compare what you are saying or doing to what they are hoping for and if they have power over you they will make your life miserable until you get with their program or until you leave. "My way or the highway" is the BB's motto. Each of the egopath types can show traits of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." They have the hallmark ability to be nice, charming, caring, considerate, and sweet. But if you get crossways with him or her, "Katie bar the door." It is the BBs which are the most likely to show this confusing, exasperating, and frustrating pattern of behavior.

More than likely the character played by Meryl Streep in "The Devil Wears Prada" is this type of egopath. Although, Ms. Streep's character is clearly conniving and heartless, these traits are softened into a demure and even sympathetic character, at times. In real life, this character would have been more likely to show more vitriolic aggressiveness.

The Neurotic Egopath

The neurotic egopath deserves our sympathy and consideration. He or she has had a very tough time in life. As children, they may have been smaller than the other kids or not as socially adept. They may have a personality that could be called "avoidant" or "dependent." Their initial presentation is being sweet, nice, considerate, friendly, even charming. But it won't be too long if you hang around for a while to see Mr. Neurotic go into a shell, into a panic, into a childish state of mind. Mr. NE suffers a great deal with her/his fears and insecurities. But he/she also has the ability to become very demanding, entitled, and egocentrically flustered. This is the classic little spoiled boy/girl, "I want my lollipop and I want it now" syndrome.

There is a second way to understand these four types

The Dimensions of Egopathy

It is interesting to see how an early 20th century author phrased this dynamic. In Psychology and The Promethean Will, William Sheldon (1936) 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 asked 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 arithmetic: “relationships.” 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 2007, the Texas 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."

The Three Reasons this concept of egopathy has been so long in coming.

1. There are many people, most of whom are high-functioning individuals, who are nervous about admitting and accepting that they have a shadow side to them. The shadow side is the capacity to really hurt others who may not deserve to be hurt. None of us like to be found lacking in some way, especially in our ability to deal with people. There is a very strong human natural tendency and need to think of ourselves as good people who are not cruel or stupid about how we treat someone, especially our children and our employees. For some, especially abused or shamed people, the idea of being held accountable or being confronted is a horror that they will not be able to abide. To those of us who can take a complaint on the chin and keep on ticking find it hard to imagine such a state of mind. But

it is more common than you think.

2. Egopaths are notorious for making life very difficult for anyone who tries to confront them. These also come from the same psychological space as Number One, from unrecognized and unhealed shame and trauma from childhood. How many millions of children, wives, husbands, students, or employees have had to swallow their complaint and to repress their pain because the power-up person has made it clear that no remonstrance is allowed? How many units of suffering have been added to the pain of the world because of these brilliant, attractive, and successful yet maldeveloped individuals?

3. The third reason which probably needs to be the first is that this personality style is so mysterious. Not until 1980 did the world of psychiatry and psychology accept that there needed to be a place in the DSM. This separate "place" is called an "Axis" in the DSM. "Axis II" is designated for the personality disorders. That was only 26 years ago and yet people have been suffering from personality disorders for 100 thousand years. Why are we humans so slow to see ourselves for who we really are? The world of psychiatry is just now realizing that there are not discreet categories of personality disorders. Although that is not to say Dr. Millon brilliantly found and described and categorized the most salient personality disorders as best he could without detailed research. His was a monumental contribution to the knowledge and thinking of personality disorders and personality styles.

4. When you complain about an egopath, they and others are very good at trying to make it seem as though *you* are the one with a problem.

5. The trickle down power effect. It not only applies to doctors but to anyone in power. The assumption is "They are important; they have a big job to do. Therefore, since I am their secretary, their assistant, their lawyer, their partner, I can demand and bully my way through this and *your* needs be hanged.

Angry Moving Against

Our primitive brain's natural reaction to a hurtful situation is reactive and aggressive, i.e. to "move against." Karen Horney, the revered psychologist, said there are three responses to people. 1. Moving against, 2. Moving toward and 3. Moving away from. This is a good place to start with understanding how we react to others. But her list is incomplete when it is applied to egopathy. There is one more reaction which is very common but also very clandestine. It is the "planfully moving slowly against."

The "moving against" is certainly an appropriate description for how aggressive people can get when insulted or threatened. Read the description in Daniel Goleman's book Emotional Intelligence for a description of the automatic processes which underlie our quick, hot reactions to frightening stimuli.

In relationships, we have a meaning-making filter that floats in the psychological space between us and the other person. What ever that other person does, the behavior passes through this meaning-making filter (MMF) and we receive it in an altered condition. Sometimes our MMF creates a more positive representation than what the reality really is. This is called Pollyannism after the books by Eleanor Hodgman Porter and the movie from the 60's called *Pollyanna*, about a girl who always saw people and situations in a positive light.

But it is seldom Pollyannism that causes strife and conflict in relationships. It is just the opposite: seeing words, actions, and behavior in a negative light which causes difficulties. These seventeen words took you about two seconds to read and yet the phenomena they describe have been at the root of untold millions of units of conflict, heartache, and personal suffering. Egopaths are known for their tendency to judge harshly. They have this negative spin filter in their heads. Their minds thrive on finding fault in others and then moving in for the kill. Their modus operandi is to frame the others' behavior as despicable and then sharpen the focus, grind the ax, and steel the blade in order to do the most damage when they attack. But the egopath doesn't see or care about the damage being done. It is all very ego syntonic to them. "The attack is what any self respecting person would do" is their motto.

The difficulty with egopaths is that they discount the filter which is floating between them and the target. The egopath does not sense the filter and will even fight tooth and nail to defend that he or she is not being judgmental or inappropriate. Egopaths have great difficulty with "self-awareness." The word ego-syntonic is used in psychology to describe a symptom which the person feels no concern about. Compare this to the depressed person who is very concerned about his hopeless feeling, or to the anxious person who is very concerned about her anxiety. These people seek help and beg for relief. But the egopath, like the personality-disordered person, does not feel that the behavior they are exhibiting is a reason for concern at all. Their judgmentalism seems perfectly natural. In their minds it is what any self-respecting person would do. "I'm not the one who needs counseling," the classic egopathic rebuttal goes, "she's the one who needs counseling. If she'd do as I say everything would be fine." He completely fails to see that it is his constant judgmental faulting-finding over years that has created the conflict in his marriage.

The Egopath's Outrageous Frame of Mind

Many good people can get into a cantankerous frame of mind which is difficult to understand. It is difficult for them to understand it and it is difficult for any loved one to understand it. The egopath's outrageous behavior is grounded in that frame of mind but he or she is usually very unaware of this cloaked and obscure intrapersonal dynamic. A 31 year old daughter came in to see me. Her mother had always been egocentrically busy but caring, nonetheless. Now that this daughter had moved to a far away city she, the daughter, has become depressed. She has not called her mother or her father in many weeks. She even visited her home city and did not call on her mother. Over time the daughter became extremely depressed and still refused to call her mother and ask for help or support. Why? She says she feels "anxious" when she thinks about calling her mother. Has her mother bothered to call her daughter and say "I love you, I am worried about you, and I want to be supportive"? No, she hasn't. Her mother is in an egocentric frame of mind which allows her to be busy with her church activities, to worship God, and yet never call her daughter nor care that she is all alone in a distant city. This is egocentric egopathy; thinking about yourself first and not caring about someone who is in need of being cared about. How can we help this good person grow out of behaving badly?

The Slow Burn, Deliberate Sub-Clinical Borderline Person

Many high functioning people are really quite low functioning in their sense of self

or their level of emotional intelligence. By that I mean they function like a “sub clinical” Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). A person diagnosed with BPD presents with emotional dysregulation, and often slips into overbearing emotions such as fear, hyper arousal, and anger. The high-functioning personality disordered person, or egopath, will generally not succumb to externalized, emotional dysregulation but will, instead, engage in cool-headed aggressive planning to discredit, demote, censure, belittle, deny, and reject the person they perceive as being a threat to their position or psychological safety.

Retribution is almost always a part of the motivation complex. When an egopath feels affronted they do not have the skills or the self-esteem to react benevolently and without malice. In fact, the word “affronted” seems to have been invented just for egopaths, since it perfectly describes the reaction and feelings of an egopath. I am reminded of the lady socialite in the Marx Brothers films who indignantly exclaims, “*Well*, how rude!” when a Marx Brother commits his funny faux pas.

An egopath does not consider others’ feelings. In 2006, a Dallas church pastor Hornbuckle was convicted of raping three women. He even had a wife at the time. I guess he considered his actions “okay, because I ??” His attorneys were hoping for leniency but instead he was given fifteen years in prison. His sexual needs were foremost in his mind. His satisfaction was of most highest importance. The ladies needs and feelings really didn’t matter much to him.

I just returned from a concert. The large lady sitting three chairs from me had a loud voice and talked so incessantly I couldn’t concentrate on the concert. When she returned from the bathroom I said, “Can you keep the talking down?” She looked at me dumbfounded. “What?” she said. I said, “Can you keep the talking down a little?” I wasn’t angry. She looked at me with a look of incredulity, “F. . . . you,” she said with indignation. “We paid for these seats.” As if paying for seats allows you to ruin everyone’s concert experience. She seemed to be totally unaware of her booming voice. This is egopathic self-interest which means feeling empowered and compelled to do what feels good with abandon and disregard for others’ needs.

In Martin Kantor’s excellent book [The Psychopathy of Everyday Life: How Antisocial Personality Disorder Affects Us All](#), there are three faulty premises given that blur the difference between right and wrong for egopaths; those people Kantor calls “everyday psychopaths.”

Premise 1: Right and wrong are irrelevant abstractions. Self-interest, however disguised, is the essence of all motivation, and those who profess otherwise are fools or hypocrites.

Premise 2: Right and wrong are entirely valid considerations, and I am always right (and you are always wrong).

Premise 3: If I am wrong it is only because I messed up, and I can and will soon fix things and make them right.

This sounds as if the egopath is able to admit when he is wrong and is willing to make it right. It sounds as though he may apologize or make a special offering of peace or restitution. But Kantor says he is really only admitting to a “tactical error” in interacting in a self-agenda fulfilling way. He is only saying he is not going to let that mistake happen again. This way of thinking is the most similar to a psychopath that an egopath can be.

Multi-dimensional way of understanding good people who behave badly

Although I have tried to characterize four types of egopaths, I think there are only a few people who fit the profile of these “pure” types. All egopaths have their own unique mixture of traits that are as individual as a thumbprint. Each person has their own set of DNA which gives rise to a multidimensional blend of personality traits that are then refined, altered, and shaped by their experiences as a child. So it is not so important to “peg” an egopath than it is to analyze your local egopath based on the set of behaviors that he or she shows on a regular basis.

Talking about childhood mistreatment is not the purpose of this book, but I can not help but mention the importance of “welltreatment.” A child is an open book, a blank slate, an innocent receiver of information whatever you want to call the inchoate state of a child’s mind and heart. This means that parents must be aware of the best parenting and communication techniques available in order to interact in the healthiest way possible. But parents are not aware of these and the schools and the states are doing very little to ensure that they learn them. The states have their young people in high schools everyday and yet very few of them mandate or even provide classes that are designed to teach good parenting skills.

And I don’t mean carrying sacks of flour around only. Furthermore, little budding egopaths could discover they are “with ego” if high schools would provide personality testing using the 16PF or the PAI.

And follow-up personality disorder counseling and education when one of the students commits a crime.

Classes of Egopaths

Just as there are varying degrees of Axis I illnesses, there are also varying degrees of egopaths. The most severe form of egopathy is that of a psychopath. Since I prefer to reserve the term “psychopath” for those individuals who maliciously control, sadistically bully, cruelly torture, ruthlessly maim, and brutally kill people, I will not be talking about those people. A person can be bad and still be considered an egopath. Egopaths will “only” control, demean, embarrass, mistreat, manipulate, and confuse their victims. What is the percentage of psychopaths who were once “just” egopaths? Since there is no research, I would have to speculate. I am tempted to say "all" psychopaths were first egopaths. Before Hitler became a monster, he was a controlling egopath. Before Lee Harvey Oswald was a psychopath, he was a belligerent egopath of a husband.

All egopaths are attractive or charming or intelligent or successful in some way. Most of them have several of these characteristics. This is not surprising since the growth and development of egopathy is often augmented by the positive reactions from others. These positive attributes are included in the description of all levels of egopaths. So, it is not the absence of positive characteristics that determine which class an egopath falls in, it is the quantity and intensity of egopathic traits and behaviors. The most deviant of the egopaths are the Sociopathic egopaths. These are known for their mind-boggling, cunning maneuvers, callous ruses and gambits which are designed to completely undermine self-maintaining attempts and foil any attempt to establish an adult-adult relationship (see chapter XX). They will be guilty at one time or another of all three of the egopathic characteristics.

Narcissistic Egopath

Compulsive Egopath
Borderline Egopath
Bipolar Egopath

The Egopathic Nature

It seems that egopaths can be really good people who have a sixth sense. They pride themselves on being able to detect a fraud or a “poser.” They have a mental mechanism that says, “If I suspect that he or she a _____ (danger, a lazy person, non-performer) then I am sure that it is so. Otherwise, why would I be getting this vibe?” They are very confident in their assessment of others.

The 10 Most Common Attitudes and Behaviors of an Egopath

1. A general attitude of "me first." He has very little concern for other people in general. Always thinking of how this will affect me and my comfort level. If there is an “other” orientation it is likely to be a tactic to “do the right thing” in order to be seen as a good person.
2. A distant mood, unable to be reached, withdrawn at times, especially after some slight. This is often balanced by an "up mood" full of charm, humor, and gregariousness.
3. Flashpoints, "buttons," or sensitivities that the partner learns must be avoided at all costs because of the anger and rage that flares up.
4. The judgmentalness. This goes beyond the normal range like "I don't care for your dress." It goes into "How could you have gone to the grocery store without my permission?"
5. Need for control, being controlling. You can only see your friends when I tell you you can.
6. Callousness to the needs of others. "I don't care if you are feeling trapped. There's a reason I do what I do." I don't care if you're sick, go fix breakfast for me... and the kids, too!"
7. Making plans to cause someone discomfort or harm as a payback for a perceived injury
8. Lack of remorse or guilt about having caused someone discomfort.
9. Has to be viewed as "okay," "normal," and "competent." Is quick to decide someone might have a negative opinion of him. Lays down the law in intimate relationships, "Thou shalt not criticize me."
10. Horrified by a mistake, they completely ignore it, or he/she moves quickly to cover it up or to excuse it away. May feel that one mistake could spell doom for him or his job. Feels compelled to lie or manipulate to protect the self or shift the blame to someone else. Has difficulty discussing what happened in an open and mutually beneficial way.

Egopaths also have two drives which confound the whole process of understanding. 1. They WANT to be good people. 2. They think of themselves as good people, and 3. In many ways they ARE good people. So if we characterize them as “bad or evil people” then we are not going to be able to create harmony with them. (This is notwithstanding those who score above a 30 on the P-Scan who are, for all intents and purposes, psychopaths. These people are not good people.

Having said that, you may be faced with dealing with someone who is exhibiting

psychopathic character traits. Can you still think of the positive things that the person has done? There are always positive things a person has done. It's just that these actions become so obscured by the egopath's consistent hurtful behavior that we lose touch with their good side and, in many cases, lose touch with *our* good side. Our altruism is so overwhelmed by our pain, we are unable to think of someone's positive traits and carry out a healthy intervention.

Sometimes egopaths make a preemptive strike and they may not even be aware they are doing it. They are in a mystified state of mind and they don't even realize it. Paul Williams, the great songwriter, once said that during the time he was using drugs and alcohol, he would look you straight in the face and say, "I am not using drugs. I wouldn't use drugs. How dare you accuse me of doing such a thing" and truly mean it. That is to say, his dignity protective response would be heartfelt; all the while he was using drugs. Amazing.

Fear and Jealousy

Egopaths will move against someone they fear or are jealous of. We are taught since childhood not to be "fearful or jealous." Funny, how we are not taught to refrain from acting out our fear and jealousy. So we drive those feelings underground and act on them in (word that means unaware but attentive to them anyway) when we get into a stressful situation. For egopaths that means in a situation where we have a "gut feeling" that someone is going to get them or hurt them. This preemptive strike is explained well in Theodore Millon's article on Sadistic Personality Disorder. (quote from it). Since their behavior is done in such a disingenuous manner, we are damned if we confront them and damned if we don't confront them. That's the sinister nature of the egopath's web they weave.

A NON egopath may get angry. But they will feel a. guilty b. a little remorseful c. will want to approach the other and make amends and d. will strive to do better in the future.

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The Invisibility of Egopathy:

In Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*, he tells a story about a manager who was able to secure a job by putting his best foot forward in his interviews with the top brass. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) call this the "bright side" of the egopath. The bright side is put forth during the initial interview and then the "dark side," the egopathic side, comes out when they deal with their supervisees. This dual personality is one reason egopathy is so invisible to the casual observer. "Your boss, Jane, seems like a perfectly nice person," says her boss. And the more you might try to convince them otherwise, the more it makes you seem like a crackpot, a troublemaker, or even an undiagnosed paranoid personality disorder! After all, what kind of a person would complain about his/her boss? Only troubled people complain about their boss, right? What a tragedy. How many people through the ages have had to suck it up, give up, and just say, "You just can't win with these people"?

1. Narcissist
2. Borderline
3. Borderline, Anti-social/aggressive
4. Anti-social
5. Obsessive-Compulsive, Psychopathic
6. Narcissistic, Psychopathic
7. Paranoid, anti-social
8. Anti-social, psychopathic
9. Obsessive-Compulsive
10. Obsessive-Compulsive

Egopathy is not something that is easily detectable. In fact, it exists all around us and we don't see it nor do we know how to confront it. Why is it so hard to detect and why is it so hard to admit that the behavior is hurtful? I think most managers would say, "It is not hard to admit that it exists. What's hard is confronting it!"

10 Reasons Why Egopathy is So Hard to Detect, Admit to, or Confront

1. Egopathic behavior looks "normal" to many people in the third "C" Position. * The C Person is usually a person who supports being logical, fair, and proactive with "troublesome" employees.
2. Few people in society are cognizant of egopathy. You can't detect what is not talked about or described in the public forum.
3. No one is sure what egopathy is, even those who deal with it every day. They don't have a way of talking about it because the word egopathy is almost unknown!
4. The egopath him or herself has a vague notion that they are this way but they don't want anyone to see it so they hide it and deny it and cover it up with many clever gambits.
5. The people that have power over them are too weak to stand up to the egopaths and confront them about their behavior. They want to keep them happy so they don't hold them accountable. The egopaths are often powerful personalities and very productive, as well. So there is no impetus to remonstrate with an egopath. Hence, they get away with their shenanigans.
6. The sixth reason we don't confront egopathy is that we know we will get over it. Ninety-nine per cent of all people have a story about an egopath, but will report that they have "let it go" and are "now over it." This is very sad because the damage is being done and the culture of "forgiveness" only empowers and even rewards egopaths for their malevolent and malicious behavior.
7. Egopaths are usually people who have power, prestige, and position (see Horney, 1937). The C Person just doesn't feel good about confronting Mr./Ms. BIG. It's just unthinkable.
8. The C person doesn't know how to confront the egopathic B Person. They simply lack the skills to approach and successfully confront and remonstrate with the egopath.
9. The C Person may have the skills but will have the sense that it is just not worth the trouble. Many C People are big wigs, highly involved in the workings of their profession and the thought of stopping what they normally do is just too onerous a task. They would

much prefer you to forget the offense and just deal with it. Let bygones be bygones, life is much easier that way (FOR THEM!).

10. Last but not least, the victim seems like the more logical suspect. "Who is to blame in a 'row?' It's difficult to tell sometimes. Very, very often all the C People (those that might help) decide to "blame the victim." It is only natural to see as offensive the person who is depressed, anxious, neurotic, shy, negativistic, compulsive, or dependent. Therefore, it is natural to place the fault for the strife on the person who doesn't have it all together. This tendency is unfortunate because more often than not, this under functioning person has been the target of the egopath's acting out, and therefore, bears the scars and the maldeveloped personality to show it. How pathetic millions of people have been. Beaten and verbally battered for years, and then when they try to stand up for themselves, they are blamed for the ruckus. Once again, the egopath gets off the hook, free to abuse yet another day.

8* The "C" position person is the "tertiary" person that the A or the B person goes to for help.

The 9 Steps of the Egopathic Developmental Process

1. The child is exposed to untenable and irrefutable trauma and/or neglect and/or chaos (trauncil.)
2. The child feels terrified, lonely, traumatized, bewildered, hurt, and abandoned.
3. The child's brain structure* is altered forever by these experiences
4. The child grows up and learns to put on a happy and kind-hearted face in public.
5. At times of stress, disappointment, or loss the person's inner core self begins to boil. Old feelings of inadequacy, shame, fear, and loathing begin to be felt deep within the person. I call this "miasma" and use the acronym "shergars" to capture the feelings of shame, hurt, embarrassment, guilt, angst, regret, and sadness. These add up to feeling "miasma" or a putrid swamp of awful feelings.
6. Devices such as ego defenses begin to creep up in the person's mind. Questions such as, "How am I going to keep myself safe? How am I going to protect myself? How am I going to keep him/them away? How am I going to keep myself looking good? How am I going to be able to hide this shame I feel inside? How am I going to be able to obtain power and control so I can succeed at self-empowerment? When do I need to get aggressive to ensure my safety and control? Will anger serve me well to keep the wolves at bay? How am I going to be able to keep them thinking that I know what I'm doing and that I'm competent?"
7. The person begins to find people and times at which they utilize these ego defenses to keep themselves safer and keep themselves in power and in control.
8. As they are given power they begin to use direction, domination, and demanding words to control and dominate other people, usually spouses, children, employees or students.
9. They become full fledged egopaths and the targets begin to suffer and possibly even die.

* Pavlov's "cortical mosaic"

Three levels of egopathy

1. A person who is experiencing a lot of stress from loss, frustration, failure, or rejection.

This person is trying to make things better but is failing for the most part. This frustration and anger is finding it's way out into everyday situations.

2. The second type of egopath is a person who has been uncaring, callous, indifferent, sarcastic or retributive for a long time. They experienced something for a long time, probably as children, that was unsettling and difficult. They have developed a habit of being egopathic, that is, rude and aggressive to other people. But these people can turn their behavior around. If a competent therapist or a determined spouse works with them, they are able to improve their outlook on life and their behavior.

3. The third type of egopath has something happen to them in early childhood or if it wasn't that early, then there was a significant trauma that altered the structure of the brain. This is not "brain damage" per se, but it is a rearrangement or diminishment of the neural connections that result in a loss of empathy or consideration for others. In fact, there is an increase in the tendency or drive to hurt others for personal satisfaction.

I have tried to answer the question, "What is egopathy?"

Egopathy is at least five levels deep. At the core of the egopathic personality is the brain chemistry and structure. As a result of trauncil* the brain chemistry and structure was shifted to create an egopathic state of mind. The following levels are all the psychodynamic understandings of this style of behaving. At the third ring, the ego defense of "denial" is at the root of egopathic thinking. The fourth ring or level is the internal thoughts and cognitive distortions that take place. This includes the "If ... then" statements that drive the egopathic behavior. Finally, in the fifth ring, egopathy is the acting out of all the first four rings. This is the overt manifestation of the egopathic personality. So one could say, "He was being egopathic when he yelled at his team and didn't feel remorse afterwards."

How can we understand the egopathic personality as it goes through the process of attacking the victim and stripping him or her of their mental health and their self-esteem? I see this process happening in ten steps or stages.

The Process of Egopathy: Ten Steps

1. He or she generally thinks about and cares only about himself or herself. This is egocentrism.
2. He or she has a mental style of caring very little about what you need or about what you care about.
3. He or she develops a sense of judgmentalness about you and your ideas. What you think, feel, like or care about seems in the moment so ridiculous and just plain *wrong*.
4. Finally he or she decides it's time to move against you. This is called "aggression." Usually aggression is expressed in the form of punitiveness and retributiveness (getting you back for what you did.)
5. The other person, the target, will generally feel criticized, even attacked. They generally will try to defend themselves or explain why they behaved as they did.
6. The egopath will press further and defend their actions as being well within the realm "appropriate concern" or even as a way of "showing love."
7. The target will be hurt by this defense and complete lack of concern for how deeply wounding their criticism was. They will react in one of four ways. 1. They will try to

“make nice.” Usually this smoothes things over and the exchange is forgotten and things go back to normal. This is usually what happens after the first few incidents. But after several incidents the target person might do one of the next three reactions. They will get angry about something as a way of expressing the hurt and frustration that is left over from the original interaction. This sets off a series of exchanges that have nothing to do with the real reason the person is angry which is the old wound from steps 4, 5, and 6. This relational conundrum can go on for years with no one realizing what is *really* going on. The person may finally seek out therapy, realize what is going on, and then attempt to actually confront the egopath. This takes great skill, requires practice, and should not be tried without rehearsing with your therapist.¹

8. If the target comes back to the egopath and tries to say, “Hey, what you did hurt me;” the egopath will generally act dumbfounded. Either they will say “it didn’t happen,” or “you don’t remember it right,” or “you don’t understand me;” or “you have no right to bring that up again.” The egopath could up the “anti” and say, “You must be sick or something,” or “You need to move on and get a life!” Many egopaths will begin to think of how they can get revenge or teach the target a lesson; totally discounting their own culpability in the sequence. Sometimes this revenge can be so cruel that it causes the person to be forever mentally altered.

9. At this point, many people who are victims of this insidious process have a permanent adjustment in their sense of self or PS.* They have a permanent shift towards depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and/or tendency to drink or use drugs. This is the sad reality for millions of wounded people on this earth. Dear God, may they find peace, solace, and comfort somewhere.

10. When it is all said and done, the egopath will have no feeling of remorse or guilt about what they have done. They lack a conscience. They will trip on through their life without realizing or holding themselves accountable for the damage they have done to the target person.

¹ A good chapter to read in order to get a feel for this remonstrance process is Chapter Four, “Our Impossible Mothers” in *Dance of Anger* by Harriett Lerner.

² The words used to judge an egopath’s behavior

As you describe the egopath’s behavior you are setting yourself up for a battle or a blast of some kind. When you describe his or her behavior you are triggering a mechanism in their brain that does not feel at all good to them. In fact, they feel quite abused by your words. Egopaths cannot calmly consider your words and wonder if maybe they should listen to them and work on being less “overbearing” or “reactive.” Oh, no, they are perfect in every way and have no need to consider personal growth.

I expanded the list above from seven to ten on Dec. 19, 2009. However, I think it is useful to maintain a list of seven behaviors which are descriptive of the egopathic personality. I present them to you here.

The Seven Behaviors of Egopathy (Macro)

1. Egocentrism: Generally focused on one's own needs, values, or point of view. (NVPOV) (from egoism to dogmatism)
2. Other complacency: lack of being able to see it from the other person's point of view.
3. Judgmentalism: The drive or compulsion to see others as mad, bad, stupid, lazy, or disordered.
4. Aggressivism: Tends to respond by aggressively moving against them in some way. This includes verbal abuse, punitiveness, retributiveness, and controllism.
5. Lack of remorse, regret, or guilt about the aggressiveness that he or she has done.
6. Lack of empathy and denial when the victim comes to remonstrate with the egopath. Feels affronted that a target would dare to confront him or her. "I am above reproach" is what their feelings would say if they could talk.
7. Will move against, away from, or move to deprive or deny the person of something they want and deserve as retribution for "turning against them." They cannot see that it was they who did the turning against.

The non egopathic response, or "AltruCharacteristic Person, is to

1. Hear what the person is trying to say
2. To hear how the person is feeling below the words of remonstration
3. To hear the back story, the underlying story
4. To give an explanation that makes the other person feel better
5. To invite further expressions of their feelings, needs, or notions

The Five Horsemen of the Egopathic Apocalypse

1. Judgmentalness
2. Retributiveness
3. Punitiveness
4. Aggressiveness
5. Controlling

Judgmentalness

They love carrying a standard of behavior inside them and lashing out and punishing to express it. They do not consider, nor do they have an awareness of, the other person's needs and point of view. They do not strive for forgiveness and any understanding that does not serve their egopathic purpose.

Retributiveness

They* have a drive in their mental makeup causes them to strike back and anyone who dares to say or do anything that remotely resembles a slander or a threatening gesture.

Punitiveness

They have a drive in them to get back and punish the target what for they perceive is a crime or a sin so heinous that harsh punishment is justified.

Aggressiveness

When one of these slights or fear-inducing behaviors is perceived there is a fearful force in egopaths that cause them to move more swiftly and with more vengeance than you or I would allow.

Controlling

Egopaths are the way they are because at some point in their lives they felt out of control of the chaos or abuse they experienced. As a result, they are always reaching for control. That means when they are given power as a parent, a professor, or a supervisor they cannot help but to devise plans and enact rules that are designed to keep the target under control. The target's need to grow or advance is of little importance to the egopath.

Egopaths Overreact and Underreact

Dealing with an egopath is made very difficult by how they overreact to what the target does and underreact to what the target does. Egopaths overreact by becoming overly judgmental which means they deem the seriousness of the offence to be more than what is really is. They underreact in the sense that they do not tell the target person what it is they are doing wrong and do not share exactly how it makes them feel. This dual nature of egopaths makes it very difficult for the target to discern what is really going on with the husband, the boss, or the coworker.

The Brain Function of Egopathy

What actually happens in the brain when someone goes through any one of these behaviors? Nerves in the brain are called "neurons." All neurons are connected to other neurons. All these neurons communicate with millions of other neurons. Some neurons encourage the firing of other neurons which allows a thought or a movement to take place. Some neurons, however, discourage the firing of other neurons. This means certain thoughts or behaviors are not allowed to take place.

There are "gaggles" of neurons for each bit of knowledge and each set of emotions. "Egopathic behavior" is the result of a gaggle of neurons firing. When they fire, an angry, inconsiderate behavior happens. What is interesting is that the neurons which are at the root of this egopathic behavior are sending a message to the kind, caring, considerate neurons *not to fire*. In other words, when someone feels annoyed or put out with someone, they feel angry *and* they lose the ability to care about the others' feelings and needs. This causes them to behave more badly because they have no sense of how hurtful they are being. In the moment, they just don't care. After the attack is over, they are now feeling "pride" and they are generally too "proud" to admit they overreacted and apologize. They keep remembering how affronted they felt and so they plot a course of action which bolsters the "correctness" of that action. They lose the "character trait" or, as I am calling it, the "altrucharacteristic," of remorse and regret. In a setting in which I do not want to be confusing, I use the phrase "heart-centered." People can get a sense of what they means right away.

One woman was so angry at her husband for staying out late and using drugs that she felt the need to "win," "be in the right," and "come out on top," so she lambasted the poor husband with scornful words of hate and retribution. Doing that felt good in the moment. But later, she felt badly but then vowed not to "give him the satisfaction" by apologizing. Then she wondered why her husband had a "hang dog" attitude and continued to stay out late, drink, and use drugs.

The egopath thinks that what she/he sees and how she assesses things is absolutely right and therefore is completely justified in her B Position of critically raking the A Person over the coals and he/she is supposed to learn from it and have no feelings of having been unfairly ripped apart. That is the inner world of the egopath.

In the next chapter we will be looking at more specific presentations of egopathic behavior. Not all egopaths are exactly alike.

