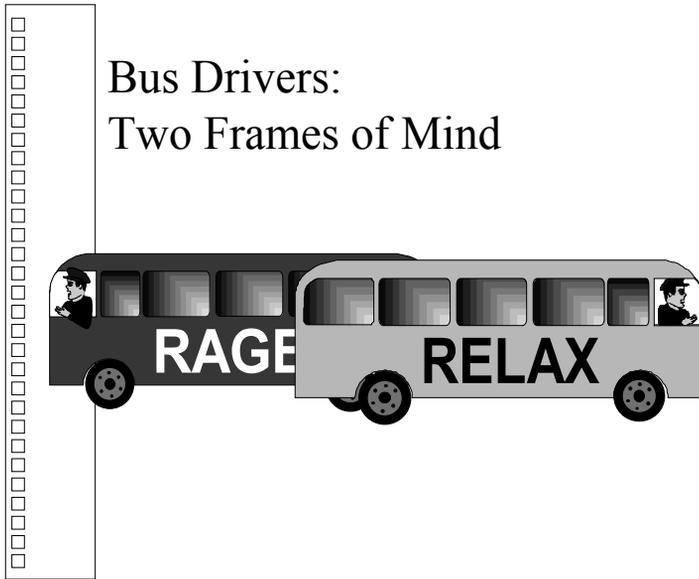
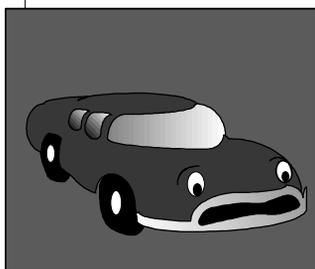


Bus Drivers: Two Frames of Mind



Recall our story of the two bus drivers. The drivers were driving the same routes and getting stuck in the same traffic jams, but were thinking different thoughts about their experiences. The thoughts made all the difference: one saw it as senseless frustration, the other saw it as a break.

Personifying



- Turns objects into people, which allows us
 - ◆ To ascribe malevolent intentions to them: “that **** car...”
 - ◆ To believe that they are capable of experiencing pain.



It is impossible to get angry at an object unless we see it for a moment as a person. When we thump a Coke machine, swear at the computer, or bang the hood of a car, this presumes several things:

- The object wronged me*
- What it did was either stupid or intentional*
- If I swear at it or hit it, it is capable of feeling the pain or hearing the insults*
- It is capable of learning, and will think twice before it wrongs me again*

We regularly perform this mental magic on cars, fax machines, ball-point pens, staplers, golf clubs, electronic equipment, tools, and so on. The belief that objects are capable of malevolent intention, feeling pain, and learning is an example of animism, a belief of traditional societies that the objects of the world—trees, rocks, clouds—contain souls.

Mind-Reading



- Ascribes intention to another person's actions: "He stepped on my toe on purpose!"
- The intentions I ascribe are usually malevolent



There is a saying that "The hardest people to get along with are men, women, and children." We frequently assume the worst about people, believing that we have some crystal ball which allows us to scry their evil intentions. It is important to realize that intentions are usually very complex, that people often wish well and ill at the same time. Often, their actions have much less to do with us than with other things in their lives, so it is a distortion to assume that everything they do is aimed at us personally.



Extremity



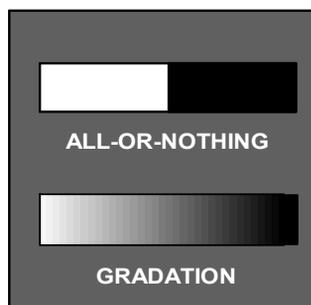
The next type of thought we'll look at is what we call Extremity. The most basic example of this is what we call All or Nothing thinking. There are three sub-types which are variations of all-or-nothing thinking: blaming, catastrophizing, and labeling.

These are four common ways of thinking in extremes—in terms of blame, judgment of character, and level of seriousness of a problem. All are variations on the first—All or Nothing Thinking.



Extreme/ All-or-Nothing Thinking

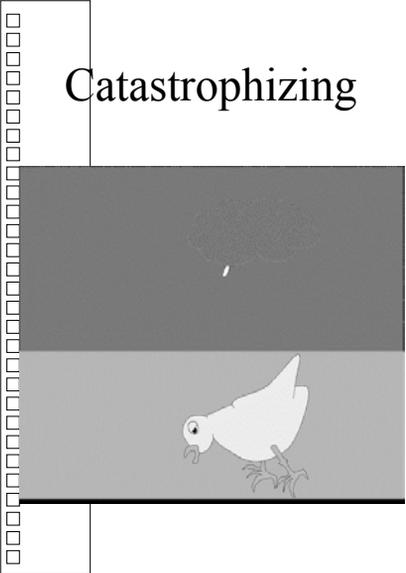
- Tends to see things in extremes--all good or all bad, friend or foe
- No gray areas, no nuances



Something in our language lures us into thinking in extremes. We have the words friend and enemy, but no words to describe those who are neither. As a result, I might conclude that a person who is not a friend in every way is an enemy. We have the words love and hate, but our language lacks words for the middle ground between the two, so we might conclude that a person who is not loving towards me in all ways must hate me. The same is true of other polarities like failure and success, rich and poor, respect and disrespect. Language leaves out the middle.

In reality, we live virtually all of our lives in the gray areas, with people who are neither friend nor foe, who neither love me nor hate me, neither cheer wildly for my successes nor laugh triumphantly at my failures. All-Or-Nothing thinking prepares the way for anger by setting up battle lines which require an extreme, emergency response.

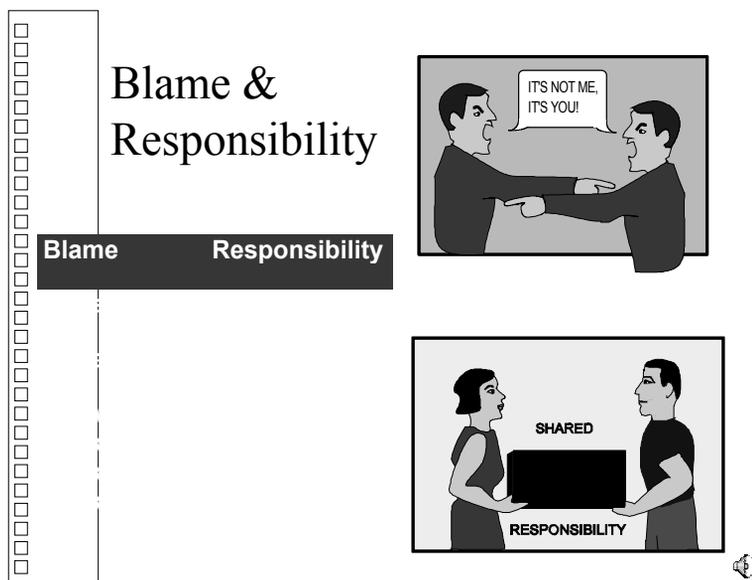
Catastrophizing



- Anxiously makes molehills into mountains, exaggerates significance and danger of events
- Signals emergency, and awakens the fight-flight part of the brain

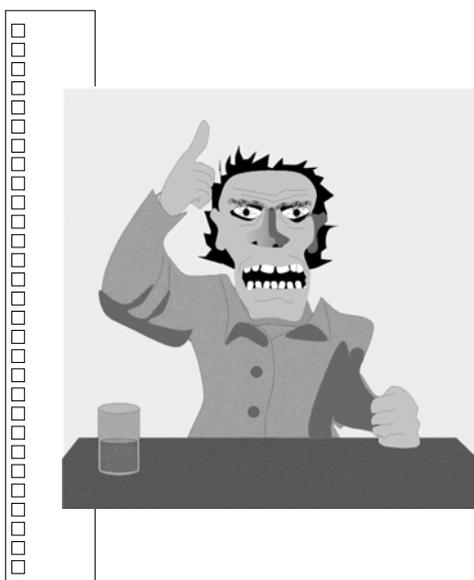


Catastrophizing makes molehills into mountains, and exaggerates the significance and danger of events. Like Chicken Little, it makes the drop of water a sign that the sky is falling. This type of thinking signals emergency, and awakens the amygdala, the fight-flight part of the brain. “My kid stole flowers from the neighbor’s yard, and if I don’t take strong, decisive action, the neighbor will probably call the police, causing me huge legal bills. I could easily go bankrupt. Meanwhile, my kid may be starting on a life of crime, spending the greater part of his adult life in jail.”



Blaming thinking can become almost second nature. But there is a second type of thinking about causality which avoids the traps of the blame-game. This second type is Responsibility-thinking.

- *Whereas blaming is negative—it feels lousy when I think I’m to blame for something—responsibility-thinking is positive. It feels good to think I’m a responsible person, I take responsibility for things.*
- *Blaming thinking is either-or: It was either me or you who is at fault, and it’s not me, so it must be you. With responsibility, it is possible to share responsibility with another. Notice in the lower picture, two persons are carrying the box, each bearing part of the weight. We could quibble over who is carrying more weight, but each one has some weight of responsibility.*
- *Blaming thinking looks outward for cause. Responsibility-thinking is reflective, thinks of what I might have done to contribute to the problem.*
- *Blaming thinking is stuck on the past. Responsibility-thinking glances at rear-view mirror of the past, but is mainly looking towards the future: “What can I do to help ensure that that won’t happen again?”*



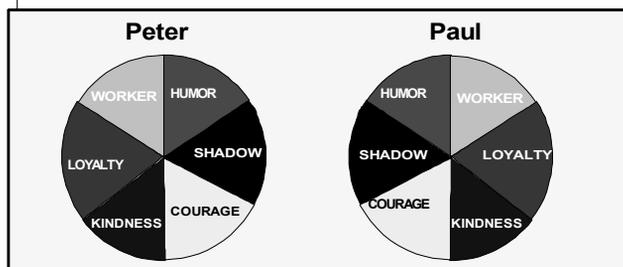
Labeling



Labeling is the process by which I attach a one-dimensional, negative description to a person.

People have many different aspects and characteristics. When I reduce a person to a single characteristic, I transform a complicated person into a simple object. We do this frequently: jerk, stupid, asshole, son-of-a-bitch. Attaching a label is like attaching a target to a person's chest, and simultaneously gives me license to treat that person differently. For instance, if I call someone a "jerk," I issue myself a "jerk license," which allows me to treat that person as one may treat jerks. Whereas I might not cheat, lie to, or swear at a multi-dimensional person, I can do all these things to jerks.

“Normal” Relationship: Two People with Mixture of Characteristics



Let's look at a “normal” relationship between two people who are multi-dimensional. Peter and Paul both have good senses of humor, are hard workers, loyal to friends, kind to animals, and courageous. They also have what C. G. Jung termed a shadow: negative characteristics like greed, laziness, dishonesty, and the like. These are parts of ourselves we try unsuccessfully to expel from ourselves, or at least keep hidden.

Let's suppose that something emerges from Peter's shadow in his relationship with Paul—for instance, he doesn't pay his full portion for lunch. Paul might notice this, but might keep this in context of all Peter's positive characteristics—his loyalty, kindness, etc. He might just let go of this shadow-material.



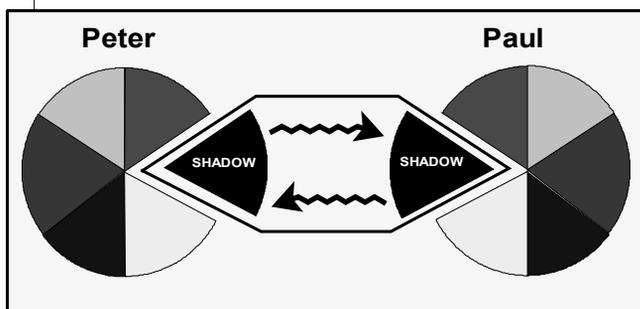
Shadowman



The Swiss analytical psychologist C. G. Jung suggested that each person has a shadow, made up of all the unwanted, negative, shameful parts of himself—his greed, arrogance, rage, laziness, and so on. We are generally unconscious of our shadows—they are behind us, hidden from view. We prefer to think of ourselves in a positive light.

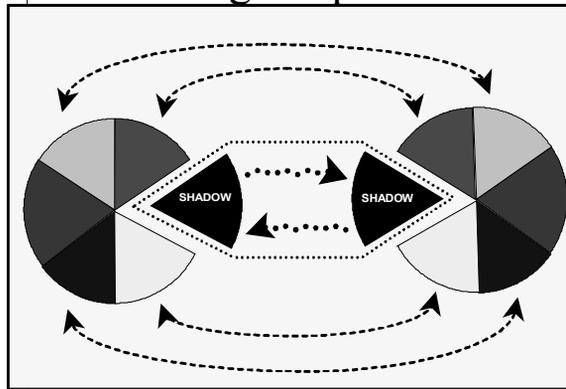
When something steps on our shadow, trips us up in some way, we project our shadow onto them. At that moment, they represent all that is negative and threatening to us, but this is happening only because they have—intentionally or by accident—stepped on our own shadow. We see ourselves as entirely good and right, and see them as all evil and darkness. Aggressive acts are made possible by this shadow projection onto someone else.

Labeling: Part of the Shadow-Dominated Relationship



Let's get back to our diagrams. Let's suppose Peter steps on Paul's shadow. If one of Peter's actions is reminiscent of something in Paul's shadow, Paul may react by projecting his shadow onto Peter. Labeling is an essential part of this process: the simple sentence "Peter is a jerk" allows Paul to see Peter in terms of this single negative characteristic, and all other characteristics fade to the background. This is the process of enemy formation. It is a process of dehumanization which is necessary if one is to do battle against someone, kill them, or commit atrocities. It is possible to fight against one-dimensional "Japs," "Nips," "Degos," or "Gooks," but not against full-dimensional fathers, lovers, friends. Without labeling this would be impossible.

Defusing the Shadow: Re-introducing the positive



Let's talk together about the process of peace-making. Has anyone here ever had a feud with someone, a shadow-dominated relationship, that was resolved? How did this happen? What was necessary for making peace?
[Brainstorm]

