



CML
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The Powerful Middle Ground

*Gregg Piburn, President,
Leader's Edge Consulting*


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Workshop sections

- 1: Gravitational Extremism
- 2: Personal mindsets (an inside-out approach)
- 3: Ideas/Models to apply


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Gravitational Extremism

- Certain words, ideologies & people spark GE
- Nationally?
- Locally?
- Professionally/Personally?
- In general, how do GE conversations go?
- The tendency to exaggerate and/or polarize


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Competition of ideas

- “A competition of ideas is fundamental to a free society. Disagreement is the essence of how we can unify as a people. When you basically see a culture that’s not trying to win competition vigorously and civilly and respectfully, but rather trying to shut down competition by any means necessary, that’s like an economy that’s going from free enterprise to mercantilism. People who don’t understand competition actually are the ones who want to shut it down because they don’t understand that competition requires rules. It requires moral precepts.” – Arthur Brooks, retiring president of the think tank American Enterprise Institute


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Motive Attribution Asymmetry

- One group’s belief that their rivals are motivated by emotions opposite their own.
- Our motives are driven by love and caring.
- Your motives are driven by hate and greed.
- MAA often thrives because we only interact with this other group during times of conflict.
- Someone operating with the “middle-ground perspective” might discern (and help others also) that both groups have similar motives but different ideas on how to best address the issue.

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“Noble Selfishness”

- Taking care of yourself so you can better care for and support others.
- Success & Satisfaction go hand in hand.
- Martyrdom is unproductive for all concerned.

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Let go of:

- Judging
- Controlling
- Having to always be right
- “The Little Book of Letting Go” by Hugh Prather

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My “3 Philosophies”

- Life is difficult
- We're all imperfect
- Use whatever happens as a learning and/or teaching opportunity
- These 3 philosophies above lead to what I call:
- “Realistic (not blind) Optimism”
- “Confident Humility”

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A facilitator’s mindset

- Create a springboard for a civil competition of ideas
- Help them shift to “both/and”
- Spark creativity with “What if ...?”
- Draw out “the answers that are in the room” (not in your head)

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”The 4 Levels of ‘Light’”

- **False Light** – Where people hide behind figurative “masks,” rather than convey true thoughts and feelings, because the real goal is to avoid conflict and discomfort at virtually all costs.
- **Harsh Light** – Where people display questionable motives and intimidating communication to win arguments, display power and/or belittle others.
- **Breakthrough Light** – Where a crisis or courageous communicator forces the group to discuss, without the masks on, a tough issue in a new, uncomfortable, and honest way.
- **Rich Light** – Where people openly, honestly, and courageously (with the right motive) address relevant and/or difficult issues promptly.

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Assumptions

- “Most of our assumptions have outlived their usefulness.” – Marshall McLuhan
- Use the internal “I assume ...” as a warning light (to check on it) rather than a green light (to act on it).

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Questions

- “Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.” – Voltaire
- “He who asks the question is a fool for a minute. He who does not is a fool forever.” – Chinese proverb

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Excellence vs. Perfection

- “The pursuit of excellence is gratifying and healthy. The pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic and a terrible waste of time.” – Edwin Bliss
- Our idea and/or quest for “perfection” sometimes means that strict adherence to my/our “positions.”
- “We’re right ... you are all idiots.”

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e pluribus unum

- Out of many, one.
- Treat each other soft and the issues hard.
- A civil competition of ideas.
- “Some painters transform the sun into a yellow spot, others transform a yellow spot into the sun.” - Picasso

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So What!?!

- What was the 1 most significant and/or memorable thing for you in this workshop?
- What, if anything, will you do differently as a result of what we discussed here?

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My final messages

- The best answers are often in the middle of the extremes.
- Help others and yourself find them.

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Gravitational ← → **Extremism**

The tendency to exaggerate and/or polarize.

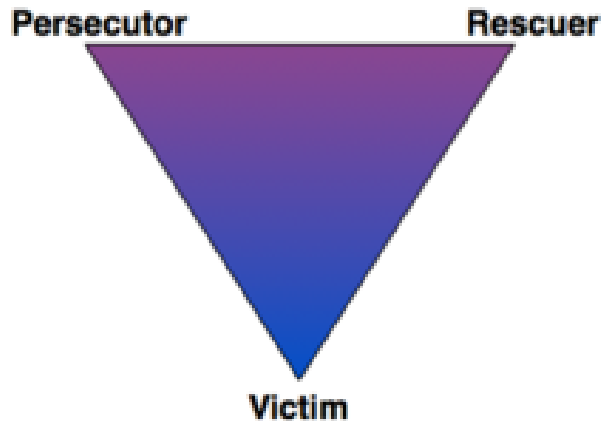
- 1: Sparks unnecessary conflict or causes it to explode
- 2: “Confirmation bias” perpetuates the chasm between individuals or groups
+ “Competition of ideas” (essential to a free society) is shut down
- 3: Compromise is deemed a cowardly copout rather than a positive norm (either/or vs. both/and)
- 4: The focus is on “positions” rather than shared “interests”
- 5: We treat each other hard (even demonize) – “We’re right, you’re dead wrong ...”
+ “Motive attribution asymmetry” – belief rivals are motivated by opposite emotions
- 6: And we treat the issue soft – “ ... end of discussion.”
- 7: Special interests (the 10% on either extreme) are more important than the whole
- 8: Passive-aggressive behavior and back-stabbing keep relationships weak
- 9: “Harsh Light” communication dominates discussions
- 10: “The Drama Triangle” is alive and well
- 11: “Bullies” are in the spotlight.
- 12: “Confident humility” takes a backseat to hubris (exaggerated pride or self-confidence)

Leader’s Edge
Consulting, Inc.

Gregg Piburn * 970-227-1371 * gp@leadersedgeconsulting.com

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The Drama Triangle



A few points about the triangle and work-related dysfunction and/or conflict

- + This simple graphic says a lot about group dysfunction and conflict.
- + The negative cycle continues as long as participants stay within the 3 roles.
- + Persecutor communicates in Harsh Light and pushes hot buttons.
- + Victim communicates in False Light and often seeks help of the Rescuer or defensively responds back in Harsh Light, Persecutor to Persecutor.
- + The Rescuer might turn Persecutor when going to the original Persecutor.
- + Individuals can take on different roles during the same conversation or issue.
- + The key is for at least 1 person to be the Professional/Adult and not play any of the 3 roles.
- + The Professional/Adult communicates in Rich Light, seeking clarity rather than playing roles.

