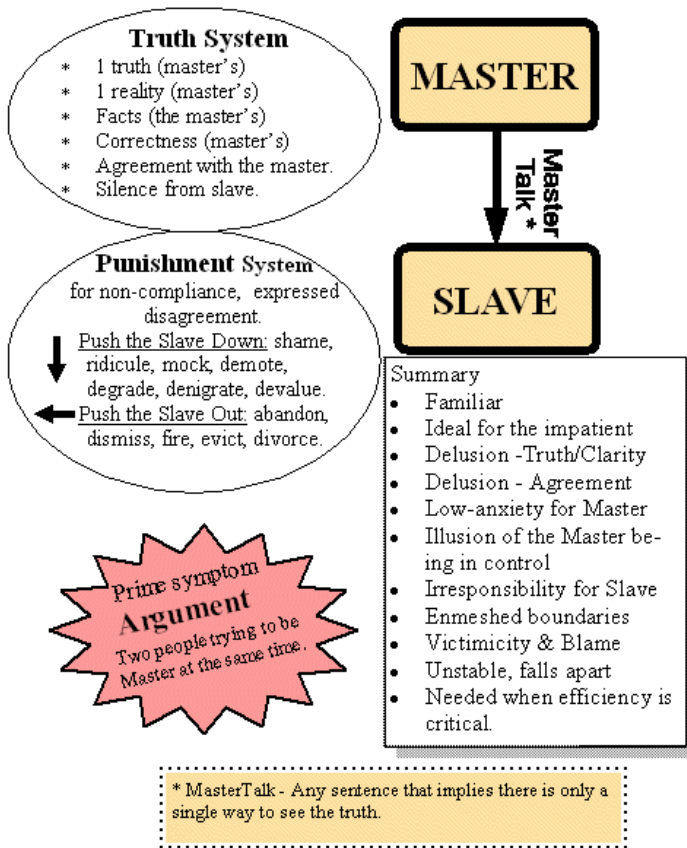


Master/Slave Vs. Dialogical

The common way of relating in Western Cultures.
Familiar, Efficient, but unstable.



Democratic / Dialogical Relationships
1Person-1Vote
Unfamiliar, Inefficient, but stable.



Summary

- Very inefficient, slow
- Requires the skill of patience
- No truth! Multiple truths.
- **Dialogical**†
- All people are responsible all the time
- Requires boundary skills
- Sharing Differences
- Safe for all
- Shared control
- PreValidation
- Very reliable in the long-term

"I believe the ideal relationship is to remain durably in Friend/Friend and to temporarily use Master/Slave only when everyone believes that efficiency is necessary." Al

* Dialogue - Any sentence that implies there are multiple ways of seeing the truth.

MASTER/SLAVE RELATIONSHIPS

The Two World Problem

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[Print the Chart in PDF](#)

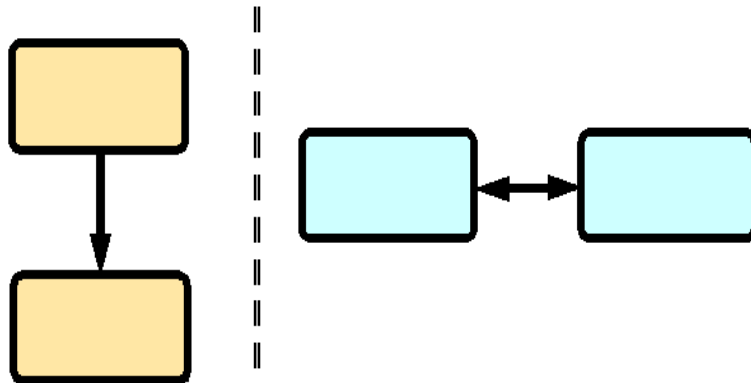
[Print the Reminders Paper in PDF](#)

Here is the Master/Slave lecture given before a live audience. Download MP3, 29 minutes long. 8726KB. Yours for \$2.50 USD.

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There are two ways for people to get along in this world.

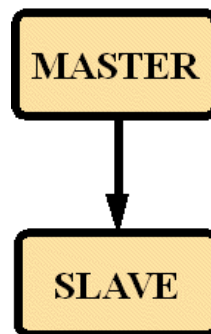
One looks like this. And the other looks like this.



In the first, one person is above the other, with communication going from the upper to the lower. In the second people are side by side, with communication going both ways.

THE MOST FAMILIAR

The one on the left, the up/down relationship, is by far the most familiar to us all. And so I will talk about it first. We see it in business, in government, and in families. I think we see it so much because it has the tone of EFFICIENCY, and modern culture almost worships efficiency. Before I explain what makes it seem efficient, let me give names to the two people. I call the upper person the **Master**, and the lower one the **Slave**.



I have been using these labels for about 7 years. At first I picked them only because the words evoked a strong reaction in people, and I think that is useful when teaching. After a while, people actually began to object to my words. [\(Check out the controversies here.\)](#) They did not want to be labeled or they already had other uses for the words. I didn't blame them. Of

course, I was speaking of "ways of relating," and not about labeling people. But then, I looked deeper at the use of the terms and found that two great philosophers used the same terms for the same issues: Hegel and Aristotle. So I guessed I was in good company and kept the terms – Master and Slave.

Now, back to the question, why does a Master/Slave relationship seem efficient? Because in it decisions (not necessarily good ones) can be made very quickly. And often quick decisions are important to a group of people.

THE TRUTH SYSTEM

How are decisions made quickly? A Master/Slave relationship has a feature I call a Truth System – a method, an algorithm, a way of determining the truth, the correct thing, the right thing, what's real, what's important, what is a fact, what should be done. This truth system determines all the black and white things, what is absolute. How does it work? If you want to know what is the true – you ask the Master. What's correct? you ask the Master. What is really going on? Ask the Master. What should be done? Ask the Master. You never ask the Slave. It is the position of the Master, and the structure of the Master/Slave relationship that determines the point-of-view that is selected.

If a couple wants to decide whether they are going to go into town on a Saturday afternoon, they simply turn to the Master. The Master says, "Yes" or "No," and the decision is made – in a quarter second.

UNSTABLE

While a Master/Slave relationship is efficient, it is also quite unstable. It falls apart all the time. You can see this all around you. What makes it so? The Slave does.

First, Masters never know when the Slave is going to rebel. Slaves always rebel sooner or later. Think of the great slave rebellions in history: from Spartacus to the American Revolution and up the present! To maintain "stability" Masters have to be prepared and on the lookout for the first sign of rebellion. I'll talk about this more later.

Second source of instability is in the poor quality of the decisions made. In a Master/Slave relationship, the Master makes all the decisions; however, they do not have all the data upon which to base good decisions. Both Master and Slave have lots of data. But Slaves are not talking. They are typically quiet, and are told to be. Thus the Master can not take advantage of the Slave's information, and tends to make poor decisions. Amazingly the Slave often knows more about what is going on than Masters do. Slaves know what they themselves know and they know what the Master knows since the Master talks. For making good quality decisions a Master/Slave relationship is not best.

PUNISHMENT SYSTEM

Because the Master is anticipating rebellion, and rebellion makes the relationship unstable, Master/Slave relationship have another feature that attempts to improve stability. I call it the Punishment System and it creates the painful things that happen or are threatened to happen to the Slave, if the Slave does not go along with the point of view of the Master. It is the hurt that happens to the Slave if they do not "agree" with the Master.

Now, the punishment system comes in two forms: downward or outward.

PUSH DOWNWARD

Downward punishment refers to lowering the rank or status of the Slave. This includes shaming, ridiculing, put-downs, humiliation, derogation, etc. The shaming can be very subtle or quite obvious. "You don't agree?" is subtle. "All sane people would agree with me!" is more obvious. "You're an idiot!" is very obvious. When I was a young, and would argue with my father, he would dismiss me by saying, "You're just a kid, what do you know." I felt "put down." Later, in High

School, he told me I was just an adolescent. Again I felt "put down."

Downward pressure also includes lowering the rank of a person within some hierarchy or structure. In a company this might mean a demotion. "If you talk that way, you risk that promotion." In the military it might mean lowering your pay grade. In a family it might mean being reminded you are "just a kid". In a community meeting it might mean saying, "You are n outsider. What do you know!" In civilian life we lower the rank of felons by taking away their vote.

I think it worth mentioning that threat is just as effective as actual punishment. The brain is designed to recall things that lead up to pain and learns to react to the warning of pain just as quickly as to the actual pain. I knew a father who controlled his family by just clicking his tongue. They knew what pain would follow if they did not jump to it, now!

Threat of put-down seems an artwork in our culture. Just turn on talk radio or TV. "Any sane person knows that" Here's a message that is a threat to anyone who disagrees. If you speak up, you are already labeled "insane." "Every patriot supports the war in Iraq!" Here's a threat to anyone who disagrees. If you speak up, you are labeled anti-patriotic.

PUSH OUTWARD

Outward punishment, or outward threat, refers to disconnecting the slave from the relationship or community. We have many words for this. In a company, this would be firing. In the military, this would be a discharge. In a church, it is excommunication. In a community, it is to ostracize or shun. In a country, it is to exile. In a group, it is to cancel membership. In a meeting, it is dismissal. In a family, it is "go to your room!" or "get out of here!" or "keep your mouth closed!" or "I'm not talking to you." In a marriage, it is separation, refusal to talk, or ultimately divorce.

Or again all these things can be threatened with just as much powerful effect. The most famous threat in the United State is the phrase, "My way or the highway." This phrase is so common that it has become an adjective. "My dad had been a Marine, and he was a my-way-or-the-highway kind of guy."

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A MASTER – SLAVE RELATIONSHIP?

When a couple walks into my room or even when one member of a partnership comes it, I can usually recognize a Master/Slave relationships by two symptoms or signs.

SILENCE

If someone complains about silence, I expect to find a Master/Slave problem. A relatively stable Master/Slave relationship (remember Master/Slave relationships are inherently unstable) will have communication going only in one way from Master to Slave. The Slave will have learned to be silent about any disagreement. The Slave will be keeping their differing points of view secret. The typical Master does not notice at first, but in more mature relationships I often hear things like, "I can't find out what she wants" Or "He won't tell me. He's quiet all the time."

(By the way, I think this is a pretty good definition of agreement: one person thinks there is agreement, but is in some level of delusion. Their partner knows there is no agreement, but is keeping silent about it. From this emerges the one-liner: "If two people are agreeing, then at least one of them is lying - withholding their truth.")

This silence is one thing that makes Master/Slave Relationships unstable. The decision-maker is uninformed, and is often critically in delusion about what is going on in their partner.

When I am working with an individual in a relationship, I often focus on this problem. If they mention something their partner does that they don't understand, I invite them to share why they

don't know what is going on in their partner. When they share, "He/she won't tell me" I then PreValidate the non-present and non-speaking partner and move to teaching about Master/Slave. "Of course they don't tell you. You are probably a pain in the neck to talk to. Let's see if we can figure this out."

Silence is so major a problem that I often give people a couple of one-liners to help them learn. The one reason a person is quiet is that it is not safe for them to talk. The one reason a person lies is that it is not safe for them to tell the truth.

ARGUMENT

The most common sign of a Master/Slave Relationship is an argument. Simply put, an argument is two people trying to be Master at the same time. And both are using Punishment systems, trying to pain their partner into pretending agreement, with varying success. If you are arguing, then you are probably trying to establish your "Truth" as the only truth, and get you partner to appear to agree. Arguing is the verbal behavior of two bullies. (A bully is a person who wants their way and will cause pain for others if they don't get it.)

Arguing is admired in our culture. People often express their power and strength in arguments. Our TV and politics are full of arguments. Yet almost all couples who come into my office state that arguing is a problem. What I have come to believe is that couples are often more mature than the culture they live in.

SUMMARY OF Master/Slave Relationship

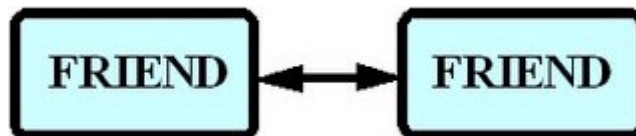
This is the common way of relating that evolved from a need for efficiency. Used by couples, it is a source of distress, arguing, and resentment. While efficient, it is unstable, painful, and does not provide for the intimacy that couples hope to find in a love relationship.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO MASTER/SLAVE

Many people don't seem to be aware that there is an alternative. I hear people say, "Either I have to fight or I lose and have to be quiet." Yet there is another way.

A couple hundred years ago there occurred on the face of the earth a event – called the American Revolution. This revolution, I believe, was brought on by an "allergic reaction to being Slave." "No taxation without representation," etc. People identified themselves as Slaves to an unfair Master and said, "No more." This is a very powerful effect, and if you want to to take a look at it in detail, consider teenagers. "I don't care what you say, Dad, I'm not going to do it."

Out of this rebellious allergic reaction was born a 1-person, 1-vote way of relating, or Democracy - a way of relating that I call Friend/Friend.



Notice that both members of the relationship are on the same level and that communication flows in both direction. (Also I am certainly aware that the American Revolution was not the first occurrence of this rebellious

impulse in the world. I believe it goes back to hunter-gatherers millennia ago. But I use the American Revolution as a dramatic example.)

UNFAMILIAR

While Master/Slave Relationships are very familiar, Friend/Friend Relationships seem quite unfamiliar. Americans love talking about their democracy, and I think we have been growing in our awareness of what democracy implies. While democracy has its political aspects, I think it is in one-to-one relationships, in marriages, partnerships and families where its biggest revolutions are occurring.

One place Friend/Friend Relationship occurs is during the dating and Romantic Stage of relationships. We commonly see Friend/Friend here, but we tend to overlook it, when perhaps this should be a clue to what is going on in an Intimate Relationship.

STABLE

Friend/Friend Relationships, if you know how to make them work, are very stable and last forever. The simple reason is that this is a WIN-WIN relationship. Nothing can happen unless both parties vote "Yes". Thus everybody wins all the time. Who would want to leave a relationship like that?

INEFFICIENT

Friend/Friend Relationships have several significant problems. The first problem is that it is massively inefficient. A simple decision that would take a couple a half second in a Master/Slave Relationship, may take weeks to negotiate. (If you want to compare Master/Slave and Friend/Friend relationships on the political scene, consider the U.S. Presidency vs. the U.S. Congress. The former is built around Master/Slave and the latter is based on Friend/Friend. I have never known a U.S. president who did not complain about the slowness of the Congress. Yet, I believe it is the Congress that provides the stability to the United States.)

REQUIRES PATIENCE

Because Friend/Friend is inefficient (in the short term) and slow, living in it requires the skill of patience. Now, as I have come to learn it, no child is born patient. Patience is not a survival trait for infants. "I gotta eat now," says the three day-old baby. I understand that patience is an adult skill – not a personality trait. It is a skill meant to be learned during growing up. The ideal time to learn it, I've heard, is around the age of seven. Take a seven-year-old boy. Put him with a group of adults who are displaying patience, and the kid will easily develop the mature skill of patience.

When I was seven, I couldn't find an adult with patience within 50 miles. So I did not learn patience until I was about 45. And I am still learning. When I see a traffic light that I can miss, that I can stop and wait through, I slow down. It's practice. It's taking short vacations during my day. Till I was 45 I had never examined my own level of maturity around patience. I can look back on hundreds of foolish things I did between 8 and 46 because I was so impatient. Are you impatient? Is your partner? Well, I suggest you consider your impatience is as an infantile trait. I am not interested in blaming you. No one taught you how to be patient. So learn now! Go take a course in patience. I think this is a very wise investment.

Impatient people have significant trouble with staying in a Friend/Friend Relationship. I believe that they naturally slide over into Master/Slave in order to meet their needs for haste. If you want to stay in, or retrieve, a Friend/Friend Relationship, I suggest you develop patience. You will need it.

MULTIPLE TRUTHS

The second great difficulty with the Friend/Friend Relationship is that there is "NO TRUTH." Most people have never seen a situation where there is no truth. For them this is really unfamiliar territory.

Now, I certainly believe in the Truth of God, etc. But I am fully aware that each of us has a different view on those Truths. Specialists in this field of study, General Semantics, refer to WIGO or "What is Going On". They point out that there is such a thing as WIGO, but no one knows what it is. Everyone just has their point of view of WIGO. If I want truth, I have to look into my heart or my soul. I will find my truth. If I speak to you, I share my version of that Truth – my truth.

Which version of the Truth is the right one? One way of looking at it is that each person thinks their version is the best at any given moment. I repeat, each person's current view is the best they have at that moment.

Another way of stating the problem is that with only one vote per person, there is no way to choose one of those "best" truths as THE "best" truth.

This brings up the issue of "agreement." One way of saying it is "that there is no such thing as agreement," since two point of view are never completely identical. At some level of detail there is always difference and disagreement. Another way of looking at it is that "agreement" is a decision on both parts that their points of view seem close enough so that proceeding to action is a safe bet. "My thoughts seem pretty close to yours! Let's do it."

THE JOURNEY OF COUPLES

Most couples who come to see me started their relationships in Friend/Friend and then at some critical point, they switched to Master/Slave and have been there, fighting, ever since. They fall in love, are buddies and then move into a house where they start to argue over what is "right". When I show them the structure of Master/Slave and Friend/Friend, they want to get back to where they started. Now, I believe this is quite possible.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

One thing I noted was that the way people talk in a Master/Slave Relationship is fundamentally different from that in a Friend/Friend Relationship, in two ways.

MASTER TALK

In M/S people use what I call MasterTalk. I gave it a name because I found that once you start to note it, it is pretty easy to see – it almost seems objective. I define Master Talk as any sentence that implies a single truth. "It is cold in here." "We had a good weekend." "Terrorists are evil." "You are cheating." The Master form of MasterTalk are absolute statements of "truth."

*** MasterTalk - Any sentence that implies there is only a single way to see the truth.**

Slaves use another form of MasterTalk. It still involves a sentence that implies a single truth, but

Slaves say that they don't have the "truth". Slaves ask questions (of Masters) to invoke that absolute "Truth". "What are we going to do today?" "What really is going on?" "What should I do?" "What is the right word."

The most common Slave form of MasterTalk is the phrase "I don't know." It implies there is something to be known, and that the Slave doesn't have it.

Amazingly I noticed that the purpose of Master Talk is not to communicate data. I think its purpose is to test and reaffirm the current stability of the ever unstable Master/Slave Relationship. When a Master makes a dogmatic statement, I think they are (consciously or unconsciously) testing the people around to see if they are in a willing or rebellious mood. I say, "It is hot in here," and then I wait to see if anyone objects or rebels. If the room is silent, I stay relaxed. If someone objects, I have to bring out my Punishment System. I repeat. I think MasterTalk is about maintaining stability in an inherently unstable relationship. MasterTalk is all about persuading, or signaling that I have been persuaded, that an "idea is best for us".

Certain words can clue you into MasterTalk: "is" , "know", "the fact that", "reality", "we" or "you."

[Click here](#) for further discussion of MasterTalk.

Note: In a M/S people also use the "Language of Blame."

DIALOGUE

The Friend/Friend communication style is called dialogue. I define dialogue as any sentence that implies the existence of multiple truths, multiple points of view, and also recalls that each person thinks their point of view is best at this moment. "I like broccoli. What do you like?" "I think Bush is a good president. Do you have any thought on the subject." "I hear what you like AND this is what I like." Dialogue is all about sharing data and encouraging independent decisions on what is "best for each."

*** Dialogue - Any sentence that implies there are multiple ways of seeing the truth.**

Many words can signal that dialogue is being used. The word "I" is used frequently. The word "know" is replaced by "believe", "recall", "remember", "think", "imagine", "guess", "get it that". "We" is replaced by "I think (believe, etc) that we..." The word "you" is replaced by "I imagine that you...", "I get the impression that you...." My favorite phrase is "That is my belief. Best that I've got. Of course, my belief plus a dollar get me a poor cup of coffee. What do you believe?" I am acknowledging that I am aware that my point of view, good as I think it is, has no intrinsic value for anyone else.

LANGUAGE IN OUR CULTURE

MasterTalk is so common in the media and at home that it seems almost automatic. I think it is the most common kind of communication that children hear from adults. Dialogue usually must be taught to adults who have lived in this country. When I work with couples I use Mirroring and Intentional Dialogue to teach dialogue. In the process I help them unlearn MasterTalk.

What makes teaching Dialogue easier is that it seems more natural. The process of dialogue matches well with

the internal self-awareness of human brains. "I'm different," we all know at birth. Communication that acknowledges differences is natural. I think it is Master Talk that has to be taught. Our culture has to work hard to teach Master/Slave, i.e. obedience. If you want to study MasterTalk, and Master/Slave training tools in their magnificence, examine the practices of military boot camp. In 10 weeks a man or woman is trained to know at the automatic level the brilliance of Master/Slave. "At any moment there is only one person present who's opinion matters – the senior person present." It is no wonder that teaching dialogue, Friend/Friend, or other relationships skills to the ex-military is often so difficult.

BENEFITS

What are the benefits of a Friend/Friend relationship? Well, there is always that WIN-WIN, that sense of fairness. There is also the long-term stability.

Master/Slave Relationships have the benefits of a seeming efficiency.

A Master has the benefit of feeling the center of attention and having a sense of control. This latter seems the more important. Many times I see people who had no control as children, and who grow up to value that sense of control in their relationship. True the control comes at a price of having to use the Punishment System and also all that instability. I find that some people who have been in the Master position often want to quit. They sense it isn't working.

VICTIMICITY

What, you may ask, makes a person stay in the Slave position for so long. Slaves have no responsibility. In a Master/Slave system, all responsibility resides with the Master. Slaves are "innocent", child-like and are not to be held accountable. Self-responsibility is an adult trait which slaves avoid. I think this is the advantage of being slave or "victim". "He told me to do it." "He makes me." "She forces me." "I had to do it." "I can't say that." Or the ubiquitous, "He hurt my feelings." "I don't know what to do. Tell me!" Each is an example of pushing away responsibility for the speaker's own decisions. I think it is a little like going out to dinner with someone, the waiter puts two checks on the table and your partner slyly pushes their check over to your side when you aren't looking. Slaves avoid responsibility for their own actions.

[Click here](#) for an indepth look at irresponsibility, victimicity and the Power of Passivity.

Now in a Friend/Friend relationship, all people are responsible all the time. There is no time when you are not responsible. But this means that people have to get clear on who is responsible for what. This is the subject of Boundary skills that you hear so much of. Friends are responsible for their actions and their reactions as well. Friends are also responsible to assist other people with their responsibilities. In the Master/Slave relationship, boundaries are completely confused as only the Master has responsibility.

[Click here](#) for a thorough discussion of Boundaries.

EMPATHY

One of the most important human attributes is Empathy. A good definition is the ability to relate to the inner world of another person as different from your own. This attribute is pretty much only found in Friend – Friend relationships. "I see how you feel and I feel differently." The word AND is important.

In Master/Slave relationships empathic behavior is rare. Master's rarely know what a slave's world is like or even that their world even exists. Slaves tend to demonstrate sympathy. This is the tendency to feel what others are feeling or to see your world as somehow mixed up with the other's world. "I get so upset when you get upset."

(This is all about [Passivity](#) and Co-dependency.)

It is the lack of empathy that allows Master's to punish their partners. Masters tend to be blind to how they come across to others. An argument is about two people, lacking empathy, who are defending themselves while hurting, punishing, the other --- all without much awareness.

PASSIVE MASTERS

An interesting phenomenon occurs when a person doesn't want to be responsible and yet isn't willing to accept the position of slave. They want control, but not responsibility. In this situation the person uses their Punishment System only, but doesn't say what they want – the Truth System. The Passive Master "punishes" by shaming others for "being mean", or "hurtful", or "thoughtless", etc. They may consciously or unconsciously produce emotional or illness outbursts. They may have migraines or attacks of fibromyalgia. This hurting comes whenever someone does what the Passive Master doesn't want. Passive Masters often appear frail or "over sensitive." I find these people in families where everyone is trying to not "upset" or "hurt" the Passive Master.

I once interviewed a couple who visited his parent's family in Butte Montana. I asked them to describe to two. "Dad is a powerful man in the community. He runs three businesses with about 90 employees. He is on many of the boards of agencies in the city. Mom is pretty sickly. She stays at home most of the time. She hasn't had a job except raising us." Then I asked, "Who runs the family, who is boss?" They both looked at each other for a moment and then simultaneously said, "Mom!"

A nice example of a Passive Master is those people who smoke cigarettes and sue tobacco companies. The trick is to remain a victim while being dominant. (For a full presentation on Passive Masters, and on all the problems of passivity and how to address them, see my paper on the [Power of Passivity](#)).

MASTER/SLAVE SUMMARY

- Summary

 - Familiar
 - Ideal for the impatient
 - Delusion -Truth/Clarity
 - Delusion - Agreement
 - Low-anxiety for Master
 - Illusion of the Master being in control
 - Irresponsibility for Slave
 - Enmeshed boundaries
 - Victimicity & Blame
 - Unstable, falls apart
 - Needed when efficiency is critical.

FRIEND/FRIEND SUMMARY

Summary

- Very inefficient, slow
- Requires the skill of patience
- No truth! Multiple truths.
- **Dialogical***
- All people are responsible all the time
- Requires boundary skills
- Sharing Differences
- Safe for all
- Shared control
- PreValidation
- Very reliable in the long-term

WHEN/WHY TO USE WHICH: MASTER/SLAVE or FRIEND/FRIEND

EFFICIENCY

There are many situations where efficiency is highly desirable. In those situations, successful partnerships will automatically organize into Master/Slave relationships. Some examples are sailing a ship, flying an airplane, driving a car, a competitive business or sport, fighting a fire or a war.

When next you fly, note the Master/Slave shift when the plane starts to land. All the passengers (slaves) are seat-belted in. The pilot (Master) lands the plane. Just try standing up during landing and watch the Punishment System emerge. When the task is over, after the plane lands, the pilot comes out and shakes hands with the passengers and thanks them – Friend/Friend.

(Note that I later defined a separate relationship pattern to describe this phenomenon: [Leader/Follower.](#))

EXPERIENCE

Any task where there is one person with much more experienced at that specific task usually develops, naturally and comfortably, into Master/Slave – for the duration of the task. Some examples are teaching, construction work, etc.

I once watched three men; an electrician, a plumber, and a carpenter take turns at being Master. It was a bathroom remodeling job. The plumber made the decisions about how and where to locate piping and the commode. Then the electrician spoke of where to run the wiring for the bathroom heater. And finally the carpenter told them how the flooring and supports would go in. Each was “expert” in their part of the task. Each was familiar with the relevant building codes for his part.

This type of Master/Slave relationship works well and is characterized by focus on a task and the positions (Master and Slave) are temporary. The group’s focus on the task

makes the punishment system mostly unnecessary.

PROPERTY

Any time that property is involved the owner is in the Master situation. "It is my car and I decide what will happen to it." Buying can be seen as two Masters coming together peacefully to negotiate trade of property.

JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

I think that Friend/Friend is the appropriate relationship style when at least one member of the team thinks efficiency is not required. A family is an ideal place for Friend/Friend as everyone share the responsibility for the health and happiness of the members.

COMMUNICATION

Whenever full communication is needed, a shift to Friend/Friend is a good idea.

DEMOCRACY

I think that any situation other than agreed on need for efficiency, experience differences or property issues need the skills of Friend/Friend.

ARE YOU A MASTER, A SLAVE, A FRIEND

No one IS a Master or Slave or Friend. I use each of these to represent a position in a specific relational transaction.

A MasterTalk (Master form) statement is sent from the Master part of a person to the Slave part of another person. If the other person responds from a Slave position, then all seems well. A Friend (Dialogical) statement is sent from the Friend part of a person to another Friend.

An individual can easily shift from the Master to the Slave position in short time and back again.

I think the goal is to use MasterTalk only when one of the valid reasons for Master/Slave exists. The rest of the time, I believe, people are better to use Dialogue.

And I think you can either be in one or the other at any given moment. I believe you can either be in Master/Slave (comfortably when it is functional or uncomfortably when it is dysfunctional) or in Friend/Friend. "You can either be right or in relationship. Take your pick."

The Power of Passivity

The Autonomy Class: Part II

© Al Turtle 2007 (Final material added 7/5/07)

[Print this paper in PDF](#)

Introduction

This paper has been growing inside of me for about four months. I also consider it one of the most risky, and perhaps threatening, papers I may write. Therefore, I am going to try writing it with pacing and kindness. In my mind, this is nothing but good news for readers. However, it may seem challenging, very challenging for some. If you find that reading this paper is too difficult, I suggest you put it off - maybe for a couple of years.

What I am doing here is following up on the logical threads that began with [the Master/Slave paper](#), and the many other papers about dealing with [MasterTalk](#). To me, that material was the Freshman Course on [Autonomy](#). I want you to consider this a Senior Level or perhaps Graduate Level course on Autonomy. I strongly suggest you become familiar with my work on [Master/Slave](#), on [Safety – The Lizard](#), and on the [Biological Dream](#), before you tackle this.

The Problem of Exposure

What, I think, makes this all so risky is the "exposure." When I discovered MasterTalk, I was actually frightened. "My Lizard started to panic!" The concept, i.e. the mental model, made it so easy to detect bullies and bullying behavior! It could be made concrete. There was no more vagueness or abstraction. It was clear, simple, and direct. Moreover, I, myself, felt so exposed in all my foolish glory. Sandra or anyone could see my bullying behavior, immediately. I could be "outed" just as easily as I could "out" other people. There was nowhere to hide - very scary.

I experienced many people resisting this material. They hated the words "Master" and "Slave." Often they became focused on the word MasterTalk, and avoided looking at their actions. They did not want their behavior pointed out. They reacted with much distress. Their [Lizards](#) became active. My core belief was that they feared exposure.

I observed all that distress in myself, considered it to indicate part of the problem, and kept studying. I began to see the overriding value of shifting people toward being dialogical, and toward durable empathic relating – what I had called the posture of Friend/Friend. In the past 6 years, I have given the [Master/Slave lecture](#) many hundreds of times. I always share it with all couples when they display in their relationship either arguing, or its more extreme form, domestic violence. In the past two years I have not seen one couple who did not have this as a problem. It has begun to seem universal to me. [The Master/Slave paper](#) is consistently one of the two most popular on my website – downloaded by thousands of people. Fear of "Exposure" or not, people seemed to want this information. I admire their courage.

Remember, all I had created was a relatively simple mental model, a theoretical way of concretely approaching top-down relationships - just a model.

Over time, and becoming familiar with Masters and meeting more and more Passive-Masters, I began to ponder about the role of the Slave in this dynamic. I had already noted that it was more difficult to help an apathetic Slave become Friend, than it was to get a Master to become Friend. Now, I began to notice that Masters, or Bullies, as I was often calling them, had been repeatedly encouraged in their often violent and/or degrading behavior. I began to see the Master phenomenon as evolving from, and fostered by, the behavior of Slaves. These observations made me nervous (my [Lizard became active](#)). I kept looking.

To get at the underlying dynamic, I first had to separate out a newly identified dynamic – the Leader/Follower dynamic. This phenomenon is really a functional subset of Friend/Friend, is Dialogical, and can be seen as a consensual, and temporary, top-down relationship. (You might be surprised to know that I was helped in this insight by some nice people who are members of several BDSM or [Dominant/Submissive communities](#).)

With that out of the way, I began to figure out ways of expressing the specifics of how Slaves operate. As I became clearer, and shared and tested my observations, I found that people who adopt the Slave position fear and resist exposure even more than those who find themselves in the Master position. Wow!

I found that Master behavior is often quite visible, more or less discouraged or punished. The term "perpetrator" in domestic violence situations is used easily. Certainly, it seems popular to talk about the trouble-bringing and nasty behavior of bullies. Blaming them seems "politically correct." At the same time, Slave's apathetic behavior seems very hidden and protected – a secret. "Don't you dare blame the victim," one person yelled at me, as I was, after all, starting to focus my attention on the responsibility of "victims." My attempts to make this understandable to others were often met with vicious reprisals. I was, at first, stunned. However, that only lasted for a while, as I began to validate me and others, and to discover the sense of this behavior – both the Slave behavior itself, and the reactivity to exposure.

Please understand that I have the kindest wishes toward you, my readers. I believe this material extremely helpful. And so, with this preamble, here is what I have found.

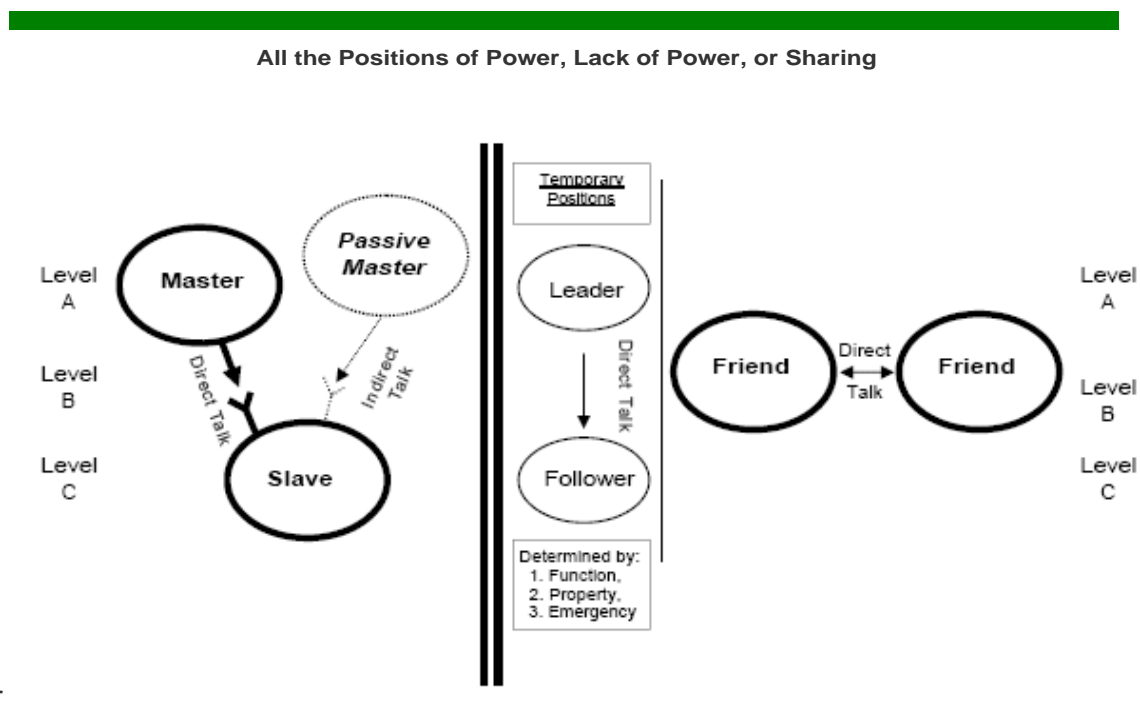


Figure 1

You might as well get used to these labels for the various positions of power between people. There seem to be only six positions and these are my definitions.

To the right of the double lines are the three postures of autonomy and democracy, sometimes called "power with", or dialogical relating.

1. Friend is that posture of wanting community, reliable togetherness, and a Win situation for all. This is what I call true democracy. A community that values the integrity of each person. Friends avoid MasterTalk and use Dialogical forms of communicating. Friends guarantee respect for all people and points of view that are present.
2. Leader is a temporary posture of guidance based on the group need for experience, emergency, or trading of property. Leaders derive their power from the active, intentional consent of the Followers. Both Leaders and Followers may consciously use MasterTalk on a temporary basis. Leaders may temporarily initiate agreed-on sanctions against displays of disagreement during emergency situations.
3. Follower is a temporary posture of collaboration based on lack of experience, emergency, or desire for property. Followers consciously "appoint" and affirm leaders on a temporary basis.

To the left of the double lines are the three postures of what is often called "power over" and "subservience," or bullying and victimicity. This is the territory of tyranny: political, domestic, inter-personal. These three postures spontaneously use the various forms of MasterTalk.

1. The Master is that posture of desiring control over others, and/or attention of others, that expresses itself by "un-owned or dogmatic" talk and by punishing any displays of disagreement. Masters need the cooperation of Slaves to exist.
2. The Slave is that posture of wanting freedom from self-responsibility or accountability, i.e. "to be taken care of," via persuading someone else to "be responsible." This is often expressed by disingenuous statements or actions suggesting agreement. Slaves depend on Masters or Passive-Masters for their sense of identity and self-esteem.
3. The Passive-Master is that posture that wants control and simultaneously wants freedom from accountability. Passive-Masters depend on Slaves for their existence.

To the six positions of power I also add the three levels or power levels.

- Level A belongs to the Masters, the Passive-Masters, and the Leaders (by appointment). This is often called "the one-up position."
- Level B belongs to the Friends and is the posture of democracy, empathy, and dialogical connection.
- Level C belongs to the Slaves and Followers (by choice). This is often called the "one-down position."

Transactions

Those of you who are old enough may recall Transactional Analysis or TA. This was a very popular teaching of the 60s or so, and focused on the verbal and physical transactions between people as a way of understanding and improving relationships. It was originally based on the simple model of Parent, Child, and Adult positions. A dad talking to his son might use a Parent → Child transaction. If the child responded using a Child → Parent transaction, communication would probably be comfortable. I liked the discoveries of TA.

I think my model is a bit more thorough, though I am not sure what a Transactional Analyst would say. Each of the six positions has a way of addressing the other positions. [See my paper on Dealing with MasterTalk for more.](#) If you understand each position and the language of that position, you can recognize where each person is coming from in their attempts to use, misuse, or share power and can respond in a way that meets your needs.

This paper, The Power of Passivity, focuses first on the trouble-bringing, the pernicious transactions of the Slave in that "left of double line" community. Secondly, I will focus on the remediating transactions between Friends and Slaves, as I find these very helpful in the consulting room and in all my relationships.

My Observations that lead to this focus.

Like most people, I used to focus on "the problem of bullies" (also called perpetrators, the violent, tyrants, the angry, "bad guys/gals," etc.) As I worked with anger and anger management, I began to see more and more of these people. I listened to them, validated and PreValidated them. In the process I found a repeated sense of surprise in these bullies – surprise that appeared when their partner called the police, filed for divorce, moved out, in later life ignored them in their retirement homes, etc. (See my story of the [Troubles with a Short Temper](#) for a painful lesson I witnessed.) Validating that "surprise," lead me to more and more awareness of what I call "partner blindness" or in this situation "the blindness of the bully." They seemed repeatedly unaware of the relationship impact of their behavior. I wondered, "Why?"

I interviewed these people and their partners, concerning this "blindness," and began to see the patterns that repeatedly led to this situation. Here are two ideas.

1. I believe "surprise" means that you were not aware of what was going on in your partner, you are not understanding them. If you were aware of what was going on in them, you would not have been surprised.

2. You perhaps may recall from my paper on PreValidation (The Icebergs) that anyone can understand anyone if a) they listen and b) the other person speaks. Thus, "surprise" becomes a function of not understanding/not being understood, and more concretely, either not listening or not speaking, or a combination of both.

Around this point a client came to my office and told me his wife was a "monster." I started PreValidating and interviewed him about what he meant by that statement. "When we got together we were buddies and close. But over time she has driven me out of my house. I can only go into the house to sit at the counter in the kitchen, to sit in one chair in the living room, and to sleep in my bed. She moved all my stuff out of the house. She told me to put it in the garage/shop. I have to ring the doorbell to go into the house. We are married, and we bought the house together. Is this right?"

I thought for a moment, and then shared my thinking. "I believe in this state the law would support the idea that half of the house is yours. You might try painting a line down the middle of the house and staying to your side of the line," I said casually. His response was, "She would never let me do that."

What came out of my mouth next was startling to me, but was a result of my thinking of Slaves. "Look. All of us have 'monsters' inside of us. Any one of us, I believe, can slip into acting like tyrants. What stops us is our friends who don't let us get away with it. What stops us is our buddies who.. well... stop us! Why did you let your wife turn into a "monster?" I don't think you are doing her any favors by your acts that encourage her."

Pulling this all together, I came to realize that often Masters are created by Slaves. I began to see that everytime a person came into my office with the habits of being a bully, they had a history of being encouraged to act that way. Bullies are people who have been told, by word or deed, thousands of times, that "acting like a bully is OK!" Most tyrants, have been acting this way, more or less, since they were little kids. They have been trained to be bullies by their caretakers. Egad!

Therefore, I began to see the specific ways that caretakers and partners encourage other people to act like bullies. I began to read the great books on [Love and Logic](#) by Cline and Fay or on [Connection Parenting](#) by Pam Leo. As I began to apply this, I found that bullies are often very open to learning new ideas and new behaviors. I noted that they really grasped how much their "victims" had encouraged their bullying behavior.

I also noted that the "victims" really did not want to look at this situation. I ran squarely into the phrase, "Don't blame the victim!" It was almost as if the Slaves were trying to surround themselves with "white light of purity" while they were simultaneously trying to "villify" their partners. Several times, when I entered into dialogue with people in the Slave position (like the guy above), I felt attacked. I came to see it was often safer and easier to dialogue with Masters, than to dialogue with Slaves. Slaves seemed more threatened and threatening. Their Lizards seems much more active.

Blame & Responsibility

Of course, I continued to be curious and PreValidated those "Slaves." At the core of the situation seemed to be the concepts of Blame and Responsibility.

Blame seems to me an act of assigning responsibility. I believe there is useful blame and dysfunctional blame. [Useful blame](#) is when we all correctly assign responsibility. I recall during my life as a project manager often saying, "This is my responsibility and that is yours. If my part goes wrong, it is my fault. If yours goes wrong, it is your fault. Let's help each other be a success." I use [dysfunctional blame](#) when I either try to get you to be responsible for my stuff or when I take responsibility for your stuff.

Thus to me, while the word "blame" seems to have a bad rap or to be called negative, I tend to see it as more neutral and to look further to see how it is being used.

All responsibility, in a Master/Slave relationship, resides in the Master position. The one in the Slave position avoids responsibility. I put this idea forth in my previous paper on Master/Slave. Masters make all the decisions, and thus carry the burden. And they get tired. I believe this desire to be free from responsibility is a factor in the BDSM games that so many people playfully enter into. (See [Dominant/Submissive](#) relationships – sometimes called D/s

communities.) Slaves maintain freedom from responsibility by encouraging the Master to be dominant – by blaming the Master for everything and by avoiding blame for anything. Masters maintain a sense of control by encouraging (using the Punishment System) submission by the Slave.

Since everyone trained to be a Slave also learns how to be a Master, these roles can easily reverse or conflict. The most visible form of conflict is found in argument. In an argument both try to act as Master, avoiding blame for anything and consequently putting all blame on their partner.

In Master/Slave, dysfunctional blaming is used to assign all responsibility away from the Slave. In this way the Slave becomes the "good one" and the Master becomes the "bad one." Slaves become "innocent victims" and their partners are designated "perpetrators." Slaves use this posture as a way of manipulating others to punish the Master. (See my experience above with the man who came to me to elicit my support at punishing his "monster" wife.) Our legal system, I believe, promotes this and needs to be worked on. Both parties need re-education about exercising their responsibilities.

The shift out of Master/Slave relating over to Friend/Friend relating always seems to involve learning Boundaries and working to determine "who is responsible for what." Thus for me useful blaming leads to discussions about Boundaries – "you are responsible for this and I am responsible for that."

Provocative Conclusions

- Bullies are people who have been repeatedly encouraged to act that way.
- Domestic Violence is often a result of the repeated collaboration of many slaves.
- Slaves over time create Masters, bullies, tyrants.
- Teaching Slaves is much more important than teaching Masters.
- "Perhaps we should be aggressively teaching the Victims also." (This thought is really scary for me to share. Please be kind with me.)

Recognizing Where You Are

One of the most useful relational skills is to become quickly aware of "where you are" with someone. Are you dealing with a Master, a Slave, a Passive-Master, a Leader, a Follower or a Friend? Are you acting as a Master, a Slave, a Passive-Master, a Leader, a Follower or a Friend? I do not want to suggest what you should be doing. I just want you to know what is going on and to give you options.

I find the clues in the very sentences spoken. Previously I have written quite a bit about MasterTalk. Now let me weave that into a bit more comprehensive set of clues.

Master/Slaves: in General

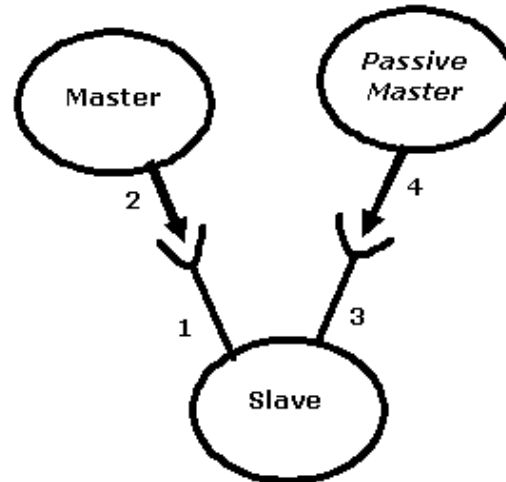


Figure 2

The Master/Slave side of the chart is uniquely characterized by unowned statements of facticity. The focus of sentences is on "what is": the truth, the correct, the facts, etc. (Since I am defining my terms right now, the last two sentences are MasterTalk.) What I have found is that I can pretty easily recognize the Master/Slave posture by listening to: a) how often people are speaking of Reality and b) how little they are clarifying of ownership of the point of view (my view vs your view of reality).

The Master Position (#2 in the chart above)

- "You are wrong..."
- "This is a fact..."
- "The truth is..."
- "What we are really talking about is..."
- "That is not what we are talking about..."
- "I know what you are thinking..."
- "What is going on is..."
- "You are cruel..."
- "We all know..."

The Master/Slave side of the chart also seems characterized by attempts to control what is being talked about, and trying to stop people from sharing disagreement. Here are some clues.

- "Don't say that..."
- "You'd better learn to control what you are saying..."
- "I don't think I should tell you..."
- "I don't want to say..."
- "If you don't know how to say it nicely, say nothing..."
- "Hold your tongue, young man!"
- "Children are to be seen and not heard."

All these examples come from the posture of the Master and are backed up, or enforced, by the Master use of the "Punishment System": put downs or rejections. The general result of these two trends is that large amounts of information is not shared, actually kept secret, and the level of unsafety, or tension, in Master/Slave is extremely high. This, of course is the Lizard behaviors of Fighting and Fleeing.

Focus on the Slave

But the purpose of this paper is to focus on the contribution of the Slave to this situation.

Slave Core Position – Avoid Self-responsibility

I've found that the core posture of people in the Slave position is to avoid Self-Responsibility and even Self-Interest. Whether they are dealing with Masters or Passive-Masters, the Slave's contribution seems to always avoid looking at themselves. They are contributing their passiveness, and thus seek to reduce or to avoid "conflict" by being silent, and invisible. This, of course is the [Lizard](#) behaviors of Freezing and Submitting. Examples:

- "I don't know."
- "I am lost."
- "I am helpless."
- "Why do I do that?"
- "I don't know what to do."
- "I have nothing to say." Silence

I have found this pattern of avoiding responsibility shows up in two forms of interactions. Most people in Slave position seem proficient in both.

Slaves with Masters – "Fill me. I am empty." (#1 on the chart)

When talking to a person in the Master position, Slaves are seeking for the correct way or approved point of view, the one they will adopt without any personal reflection, from the other person. This seems primarily the [Lizard](#) behavior of Submitting. Examples:

- "What is the right way to do that?"
- "What should I do?"
- "Tell me what to do."
- "What is correct?"
- "Did I really do that?"
- "Take care of me?"
- "Am I right?"
- "What are we going to do?"
- "Do I make any sense?"
- "You tell me!"

Slaves with Passive-Masters – "I am responsible for you." (#3 on the chart)

Only in the last year did I begin to realize where Passive-Master behavior fits in. I was always struck by how little a person in the Passive-Master position has to say to get things going. Then it began to strike me that it is the Slave who makes this relationship work.

Story: One time I was working with a young couple. We had shared all the ideas of Master/Slave the week before. Over the weekend they had visited her parents in Butte, Montana. I asked them to look at the power in that family. "Dad is the powerful one," she said. "He runs three businesses in town, with about 60 employees. People really respect and I suppose fear him. He certainly uses a lot of Master Talk!"

"Ok. How about mom?" I asked.

"Mom is not very healthy. She has spent quite a bit of time with her illnesses and she lives very very quietly at home."

"Ok. Now, who runs the family?" I asked.

Long pause. "Um. She does. Everyone caters to her. Everyone watches out for her. Every tries to make her life easier. I always thought Dad was the big power, but I guess Mom is more powerful. She's the Passive-Master."

What I have learned is that Slaves have often learned that by taking care of other people, they don't have to be self-

responsible. Their posture is guided by the single internal message, "I am responsible for others." This is their primary message. This seems primarily the [Lizard](#) behavior of Submitting. Examples:

- "I don't want to upset her."
- "I can't say that. It would hurt him."
- "What did I do wrong?"
- "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything."
- "I want everyone to like me."
- "I hate conflict."
- "Please, don't cry."
- "Don't say that!"
- "I won't do it again. I promise!"
- "I didn't want to upset you?"
- "I'm sorry, I hurt you."
- The repeated use of "OK" at the end saying something.
- Almost all instances of political correctness are examples of a Slave to Passive-Master communication.

The Passive-Master Position (#4 in the chart above)

Since the Slave has set this situation up, all the Passive-Master has to do is to contribute their distress and wait. In the silence the Slave will jump into "fixing it" and in the process avoid taking care of themselves. It doesn't seem to take much. In a way, the Passive-Master is a super-passive position. This seems primarily the [Lizard](#) behavior of Freezing. Examples:

- "That hurt me." followed by waiting.
- "You're mean." followed by waiting.
- "That is a hurtful joke." followed by waiting.
- "I can't stand it." followed by waiting.
- "You are giving me a headache." followed by waiting.
- "That scares me." followed by waiting.

Passivity and the creation of "Monsters"

I have never met an adult bully, who had not grown up surrounded by people who encouraged them to act that way. I've found that Slaves seem to go to their friends and say, "Please bully me, please be needy so I can take care of you. Either way, I don't have to take responsibility for myself."

Yesterday I talked to a fairly new couple where Master/Slave is a powerful factor. He walked into the room and announced that he "knew" what she was thinking, and that "in fact" she was trying to bring him down. While he was in his full fledged bully posture, she sat in the room quietly, with a small peaceful smile on her face, and with an almost invisible terrified look deep in her wide eyes. I stopped and mirrored the fellow, converting his blantant MasterTalk into its Dialogical form. He resisted and became quite loud. I matched his energy and persisted.

Then I asked him about the way he was behaving. "Would you, could you, act like this at work?" I asked. He said, "Hell no. I would be fired right away." "So," I asked, "How do you think you get away with it at home?" "She's never complained!" was his response. "She doesn't mind." I said, "Seems to me that at your work they would not let you misbehave, but that at home your partner makes, and perhaps furnishes, a wide-open playing field for you to act obnoxiously. Well, you cannot do it in my office. You can go to the parking lot if you want to continue. Here I am guiding people to be friends. It's your call. What do you want to do?"

This can get worse. I have worked with several dozen people, men and women, who have been referred for simple Anger Management training after arrests of domestic violence. Every one

described being aggressive and violent as children and to “throwing tantrums” in order to get their way. I’ve heard many stories of how they had “walked through life” successfully intimidating almost everyone – certainly all their domestic partners. This situation, this arrest, was a kind of major surprise. “Wow, I never thought he or she would do it (call the police).” I believe they were surprised because they had done much worse in the past and not been stopped.

I began to think of these people as starting as children who were surrounded by “fearful” and “submissive” caretakers. “Johnny’s having a tantrum. Distract him with an icecream cone.” “Find out what Susy wants. She’s yelling.”

A friend of mine, Malidoma Some, told me how he believed that a major problem in our country was that children, frightened and fragile, were giving birth to children.

And, of course, we tend to blame the bullies, the tyrants, the tantrum havers, while missing the contributions of the Slaves.

Friends are forever. Masters and Slaves have to be built.

First of all, let me remind the reader that I do not believe that people are Masters, or Slaves, or Passive-Masters; or Leaders, Followers, or Friends, for that matter. These are simply positions of power between people. They are relationship postures. They have no meaning when a person is alone. I believe all of us can adopt all those postures, and we shift from one to another. And we can choose our posture. No one is stuck forever.

Furthermore I believe that all this picture is very good news. My firm belief is that we are all designed genetically to begin life as Passive-Masters in the hands of Friend (Leader/Follower) caretakers. By watching and learning from our caretakers we are designed to firmly learn to adopt, at about age 8, the posture of Friend toward others, no matter what posture those others may decide to choose. To me, this seems to be the human design. I see this as the Autonomy part of the Biological Dream. The good news, I think, is that we can grasp where we are now, and repair or remediate any damage we have have sustained in the arms of our well-meaning caretakers. And I believe that once we get to solidly know how to “be” Friends, we will stay there.

Growing up Master/Slave

Now I would like to share how it seems to me that we ever come to acting Master or Slave or Passive-Master. What I am really trying to do here is validate anyone who finds themselves acting these ways. But first, let me share my thoughts about growing up.

Acting childlike: Neotany

For some years my wife and I were friends with a couple who raised a wolf. For years they worked with the wolf, Koani, and his dog, Indy to help kids and adults become more knowledgeable about the issues of the wild and the domestic – the need both have for each other. They would take Koani and Indy to schools all over the country to let children see a project called Wild Sentry. (Koani died very recently.) Watching the two canines together was, for me, great lesson in

neotany. This term, refers to the tendency to display childlike, infantile, or youthful behaviors in an adult of a species. Koani displayed adult canine behavior while Indy was characterized by puppy behavior. Walking through a forest together, Indy would dash off after a squirrel while Koani would not even seem to notice. I came to see how much we humans have used neotany, the retaining of childlike traits, in our cultures. Consider how Arabian horses are bred to have the head of a colt.

In many ways, I have come to see our childhood practices through the lense of neotany. How often are we trying to keep our children acting immaturely? Parents often say, "I don't want them to grow up." (If you want to see adults acting like children, consider the congress of the United States. 😊)

Given an understanding of neotany, I think it easy to see how all the positions of Master/Slave are just adults acting like children.

Passive-Masters are born

If you are acting like a Passive-Master, take heart! I believe you were born that way – all of us were. All human babies begin life as completely dependent, irresponsible little needy critturs. One friend reminded me that babies are little "suckers." Their need for resources (food, comfort, attention, warmth, cleanliness, etc.) is pretty obvious. Also their sense of passive expectancy is pretty obvious. "They want what they want when they want it." And if they don't get it, they try to create distress in their caretakers. A baby relaxes when it senses that others will meet its needs.

I remember being in a large group of thoughtful men. They were contemplating why it is that men in our culture do not make a fuss more often. One fellow, who had lived in Australia, said it was very rare among Aboriginies to hear babies crying. He said this was because caretakers tend to be so watchful of babies. All they have to do is to show a very little "uncomfort" and someone will interpret their need and meet it. No crying! A second guy from Africa, said that normally in his village, the same thing occurred. Babies were "indulged" to a degree that clearly met their needs. I think this is where the phrase "takes a village to raise a child" comes from. Kids are designed for the extensive availability of caretakers. A last guy suggested that the reason babies cry so much in our culture is because there are so few reliable caretakers around, and the available ones are often not too reliable.

The posture of an adult Passive-Master seems exactly the same. It is characterized by "making a complaint" and then passively waiting for someone else to fix the problem. The way I see it, Passive-Masters somehow, more or less, missed the healthy childrearing that would have taught them to take care of themselves and to earn whatever they get. The Passive-Master posture is all about unreal expectations. ([See my paper on Expectation.](#)) I see people in this posture spending much time finding and cultivating people who will take care of them, and being shocked when people are not "cooperative."

Probably the childhood caretakers of "Passive-Masters" did not introduce their child to making the transition to adulthood. They may have indulged the child for too long, or perhaps protected their child from facing consequences they earn. I imagine they neglected their child's needs for development. My guess is that their interactions involved the caretakers acting from the Slave

(Caretaking) position. Certainly they helped their child retain its immature passive expectations.

Adult recovery from this neotaneous expectation is difficult because the "little king" or "little princess" has to be dethroned, in some kindly fashion, and the person taught to earn what is gotten. I believe that people acting as Passive-Masters, after being dethroned, are ready to learn adult relating skills.

Masters have to be trained

If you are acting as a Master, take heart! I believe many people worked hard and often in training you to become this way. The way I see it, as a child, the Passive-Master learned how to get their needs met by switching into being an active Master. They would distress/punish people to get their needs met long after they should have learned self-responsibility. Punishing worked for them. Often these events can be seen in kids who throw tantrums and get what they want after, and seemingly as a result of, their tantrum. Their caretakers may have acted fearfully in response to their explosive behavior.

There is a principle in nature – "If it works, do it again." Masters as children have learned that emotional outbursts, threat, etc. works. Of course this bullying behavior works only if the audience (caretakers nearby) give in. Thus I have never seen a person aggressively bullying or being disrespectful that had not experienced over and over that those behaviors get what they want. This is the source of that startle reaction that many people involved in domestic violence situations have when the police arrive. "Whaaaat! You mean you won't do what I am demanding?!"

By the way, learning this comes from two sources: 1) watching others bully people and get away with it, and 2) practicing it yourself. Perfect training, I believe, is represented by military boot camp.

I spoke to a fellow, and hour ago, who has been found guilty of domestic violence. After he had thoroughly told me his version of the situation that happened, I asked him, "How many other situations do you recall that were like this in the past, either you toward her or her toward you?" His reply, "Hundreds."

I see Masters spending much time finding and cultivating people who will submit to them – Slaves. When they find them, they have to keep on guard and work hard to keep their partners submitting. Eventually Masters, people who bully a lot, will often experience a great deal of loneliness and isolation. Getting people to do what you want as an adult, may seem to create a sense of order in the short run, but doesn't make friends in the long. (See my story on [Troubles with a Short Temper.](#))

Probably the childhood caretakers of Masters, did not introduce their child to boundaries and to the skills of being mutual friends. My guess is that the caretakers were frightened of their child's emotional and physical outbursts and thus tried to placate the acting out child. This behavior, of course, reinforces the acting out and leads to an acting out adult. I think the caretakers acted as Slaves to their child – and thus created these people we often casually villify with the name Monster. (This paragraph is the logic I use when I hesitantly say, "Slaves create Masters.")

Adult recovery from this neotaneous bullying habit seems pretty straight forward to me. Their dysfunctional acting out behavior has to be shut down, firmly and kindly. I believe Masters are ready to have their distressing and punishing behavior stopped, and to learn adult-relating skills.

Slaves have to be trained

If you find yourself acting as a Slave, take heart! While I believe many people worked hard in training you to become this way, I believe even more so that the future for you is very bright. I believe you get to grow a soul! Might have been nicer to do this when you were a kid, but no time like now to restart the process. "It is the journey that is not started, as takes the longest time."

The childhood pathway to becoming Slave involves repeatedly interrupting a normal impulse. Children, beginning between age 1–2, start to reach out, and explore. They start a process of separating from caretakers, investigating things on their own, and then returning to their caretakers. In the process they learn about boundaries, and develop boundary skills, and as a result of this process, a child develops the foundation for integrity, and a solid sense of self. (There are many books about [Attachment Theory](#) that can help you see understand this process.) In order to train a person to act like a Slave, caretakers interfere with with this normal process.

In one situation the parent challenges the child's independence by dominating or controlling behaviors. "Don't do that." The child will resist (often saying "No!") at first, because they are doing something healthy and that they are programmed by DNA to do. By repetition ("Do what I tell you!"), the caretakers wear the child's healthy impulse down, and the child placidly awaits instructions from the caretakers. This placidity is the posture of a Slave with a Master.

In another situaion the parent displays distress at the child's independence. "It scares me when you do that?" The child will resist for a while. By repetition ("You are a selfish little kid. Don't you see how you are hurting me?"), the caretakers wear down the child. The child then begins to take care of the caretakers. In some way this can be seen as an altruistic principle – "taking care of you makes me feel better." This caretaking of the adult by the child is the posture of the Slave with a Passive-Master.

This training can be very strong if the child awaits instruction from one parent and takes care of the other. I find it very common for people to demonstrate both Slave behaviors in the same sentence. "I don't know how (I am helpless) to stop hurting you (I am to blame for your pain)." An example including caretakers might be, "Dad, tell me what to do, so that I will not hurt Mommy?" (By the way, this is not far from "Dad, tell me what to do so that you will stop hurting Mommy?" Children seem remarkably sensitive to what looks to them like one parent hurting the other.)

In both cases, the child aborts the normal pattern of exploration, development of boundary skills, and a secure sense of self. They often do not talk much. If you ask them a question about themselves, they look startled. Self-initiative and self-responsibility are poorly developed or completely lacking. But they do appear to be "obedient," and fit into organizations where "slavish" obedience is expected.

I believe this posture is also the core of what is called Co-Dependence.

I see Slaves spending much of their time seeking out people who will fill their self-emptiness: by ordering/bullying them around, or by providing "neediness." When Slaves find these people, they relax into compliant conformity or caretaking, or alternately both. Conformists fill many institutions: military, churches, etc. But their dark side is being passive, making space for any tyrants they meet to be free to exhibit their awful behavior. Caretakers fill many other institutions: social services, counseling, medical professions, etc. But their dark side is being tyrannical when disobeyed.

Probably the childhood caretakers of Slaves did not encourage their children to grow. Instead, I imagine, they wanted their children to take care of them. This seems to be the idea of "needy children giving birth to children who will meet their needs." The children get to observe lack of self-responsibility in their parents and thus learn it themselves. They also get to learn how to take care of other people and get a sense of worth from doing it.

I think this kind of parenting makes for the most difficult adult recovery of all. This person has put off (neotany) self-maturing in the cause of taking care of others. I have observed that self-maturing is a prolonged process, and learning the adult distinction between "caring about" others rather than "caring for" others is a bit tricky. I believe that Slaves are ready for exploration of themselves, development of a secure sense of self, and to learn adult-relating skills.

What to do?

I shared this paper with a friend who was asking what to do about his relationship with his wife. His response to the paper was, "Ugh! Okay, I get it. I'm a slave in this relationship and my actions created the master - so, now what should I do? How can I start taking care of myself, be responsible for myself, and quit making her the "decision-maker"? I admit, this is a really scary area for me."

Here is how I interpreted his response based on my guesses and the clues about Master / Slave transactions I have shared with you all.

- "Ugh!" I don't like this. It hurts. Possibly a Passive-Master response.
- "Okay, I get it." Submission and agreement with someone (perhaps me). Probably a Slave response.
- "I'm a slave in this relationship, and my actions created the master" Pure MasterTalk.
- "So, now what should I do? How can I start taking care of myself, be responsible for myself, and quit making her the "decision-maker"?" Asking someone else to take responsibility. A pure Slave response.
- "I admit," A Friend response acknowledging a past pattern of secrecy, probably mixed with Slave response of submission.
- "this is a really scary area for me." Probably, because it was the end of a paragraph and not followed up on, this is a Passive-Master response, again waiting for me to fix his problem.

My first response to him was, "Please be clear. You don't have to do anything." Why would I think of that first? I have found that helping people to change begins with firmly refusing to take responsibility for what they do. I think this is a trap for anyone who teaches. I have fallen into

this trap over and over. I don't wanna do it again.

Let me be clear with the reader. My website does not contain a single fact. Whether I've said it does or been clear that it was full of opinions, ideas, and beliefs, I am very clear my books, and articles contain my opinions and thought-out conclusions – nothing more. These are my best beliefs. As I have often said, "My thoughts plus a dollar get me a cheap cup of coffee – nothing more." If these thoughts are valuable to you, you have given them their value.

The trap for teachers, counselors, etc. has to do with students and clients slipping into the Slave position (WUS factor) and inviting the teachers and counselors to slide into the Master position (Tyrant Factor). I suggest you don't do it. I don't wanna do it. And so when this friend asks, "...now what should I do?" I respond, "You don't have to do anything. I can share some ideas, but you'll have to determine if they are right for you. You'll have to decide what to do yourself."

With this possible invitation by my friend to join him in Master/Slave out of the way, I can invite him to join me in Friend/Friend.

Recognizing neotaneous relational behavior in self and others and BEING KIND

As I teach this model, I find that while it is now much, much easier to see Master or Slave or Passive-Master behavior, something tends to get screwy in people who start that looking for it. Perhaps this is just a sign that others are feeling the same kind of panic I felt when I came across MasterTalk – something about exposure. What I am thinking is that it is easy to become very critical of others and/or be self-critical, a bit perfectionistic, and sometimes cruel. The temptation to speak up immediately when you witness these behaviors seems strong – and I don't think very helpful. I have trouble with this. I think a big piece of the problem is that all these behaviors are neotaneous – another word is "childish" which can be used so negatively. So I sit here wondering, "What is the best way to approach it when I see myself acting childish or see others acting childish?"

And I have two thoughts. The first is that I want to be kind and remind myself and others that I/they can do better. Long ago when I was learning to meditate, a teacher told me a way to approach my rebellious mind. My mind kept wanting to focus and busily think. I was trying to get my mind to relax, to be at peace. The teacher said, "Visualize a 4-year old boy walking in a park with the most wonderful, kind grandfather you can imagine. The boy bounces around like a puppy looking at everything. He can barely contain his aliveness. The grandfather repeatedly, gently, and kindly reminds the boy to come back to the path they are walking on. Now, let your mind be the 'little boy' and let your intention be that kind grandfather." And so I suggest you be kind and gentle in reminding yourself and others.

A second thought is that acting childish is pretty close to acting childlike. I see nothing wrong with responsibly acting childlike. (I love the idea that kids play at being adults, while adults just play. I also think this is what the BDSM communities seek.) If I want to act out like a bully, that is not a problem when I am in some situations – acting in a play or being a drill sergeant. But if I do it at home or on the job, then I am in trouble. If I want to be a Passive-Master (and that temptation is delicious), doing it at a Turkish Bath, or getting a manicure, is really desirable. But if I do it in my family, conflict will arise. If I want to be Slave (and sometimes the relief from responsibility is

delicious), I can do it on the job if I am a short-order cook or a taxi driver. But if I do it at home, eventually trouble will surface.

When I studied Abnormal Psychology years ago, my teacher pointed out his true definition. Abnormal Psychology "was the study of people who were acting in a way that bothered someone." If everyone is happy, don't mess with it. If it is working, for everybody, don't change it. When it stops working for one person in a group, I think it best for the whole group to stop and learn.

Relationally Growing Up

I worked with a guy the other day in a first session. He slid into the Passive-Master position. "I have this problem," he said and laid the whole issue out before me about his wife leaving him. I mirrored and validated as he spoke and finally he came to an end. I invited him to go on and he said he had told me all, I needed, assuming probably that I would enter the Slave position and "take care of him." I stayed in the friend position, and said, "Sounds like quite a problem. What are your options? How do you plan to deal with it? Any ideas?" He then shifted to the Slave position with, "I came to you. What should I do?" I replied to his shift by staying in Friend and saying, "Well, I have lots of ideas, but I don't know if they will be useful to you. Would you like to hear some?" He then shifted to Master and loudly snapped, "Look, your job is to fix this. Tell me what I should do! What good are you?" It was fun.

I am sharing this story because I have noted that people while people tend to see the Masters, the Bullies, as the "bad ones," I believe that no position on the Master/Slave side is any better than another, and that we all can be in any them. The cure is never to stop being Master or Slave or Passive-Master. The cure is to "grow up" and shift to the Friend/Friend side, the side of being Dialogical, the side of Autonomy, and of sharing power and responsibility fairly.

I believe the reliable way to make this happen for others is to lead them by doing it yourself first, and to help/guide others to join you. This is the opposite of being Passive. Leading is being proactive. The situations you are facing are full of passivity. You have to focus on your goal and tenaciously hang on to it. You have to stay "grown up" inspite of the temptations to slide into neotanus behaviors.

This is not easy. It takes work. It takes lots of practice. And I think the work is very specific, straightforward, and clear.

Using this orientation as a template, let's look at "Fixing it." There seem to me to be three points of view for this exercise:

1. I am an outsider (counselor, friend, parent, etc. who observes people acting childish in their relationship to some other person;
2. I am a person who's friend or partner is acting childish in their relationship to me;
3. I am a person who's partner or friend is reminding me that I am acting childishly.

I will focus on the first point of view – looking from the position of a Friend (as Friend/Friend) at people acting in a childish fashion.

But first a moment of review of what each posture is "seeking."

To grow up, Masters seek:

The easiest to deal with, I believe, is the Master posture. Masters generally are fairly competent people. They often "make things happen" in our culture. Frequently in couples counseling, they are trying hard to make the relationship better while their partner is quiet. They have two shortcomings, beside the usual lack of mature relationship skills.

Problem #1 They are quite blind to what is going on in others and don't know it. I like to think of this as living in a delusion. They think they know what is going on, but they don't know. They react to their "fantasy" of what is going on in others. When you ask them what their partner thinks, they will tell you, even when their partner is sitting next to them. They will not even ask. Their relationships often collapse in great surprise to them. They will experience great shock when they discover the worlds of other people. "Wow, I didn't know she was so upset." "He has no reason to be quiet! What is the matter with him?" Their delusional state is supported by their partner's silence.

I once worked with one of these guys. (The postures of Master/Slave have nothing to do with gender. My stories may focus on guys.) He was a very competent person, elected to political office, and ran a large company. He came across as obnoxious, but no one told him. For 8 hours I listened to him telling me how wonderful he was. I mirrored, validated, PreValidated and just listened. The only challenge I made was that every 15 minutes I would point out that I had a different point of view than he, but I that I was enjoying listening to him. He would stop for just a second and then go on with his story. He was terrified that people were different and bullied anyone who spoke up to disagree. At the end of 8 hours he seemed to get so comfortable with me that he said, "Look, Al, I didn't come here to have you just listen to me. I want to know what you think." And I said, "Therapy can now begin."

Problem #2 Masters have great skills in intimidating and threatening others. They are often masters of threat. This is really easy for them to do. In the long run, this behavior just drives everyone away. But it frequently satisfies the needs of Slaves. Masters will experience significant shock when their intimidating behavior is blocked or ignored. "Wow, she called 911! I never expected that."

In order to mature, Masters seek someone who will lovingly help them break their delusion, and lovingly stop their threatening behavior. Oh, and this person must not act like a Slave. Generally once they can see their problems, then their "competency" will lead them toward Friend/Friend. Of course, they will need to learn the usual mature relationship skills: adult dialogical skills, patience, and good boundary skills.

To grow up, Passive-Masters seek:

Passive-Masters are a bit harder to work with. They act as little children waiting to be

served by others. And they have usually wandered through life finding Slaves (caretakers) who will meet their needs. Yesterday, someone reminded me that these are the "little Princesses and little Princes" we see. Passive-Masters have a sense of self-worth, based on how people treat them royally. Their core issue is expectation. They expect other people to do things for them all the time. They experience shock, a deep sense of deflation, when people do not meet their needs. They will get upset, or sick, or depressed, etc. when they don't get what they expect.

In order to mature, Passive-Masters seek someone who will lovingly help them develop self-competency and self-responsibility. Oh, and this person must not act as a Caretaker or Slave. Two words come to mind. They need to be "weaned, to learn to "earn" whatever they get. They need to be invited and guided to develop personal competency. And they have blossom: discover who they are – their uniqueness. Of course, they also need to learn the usual mature relationship skills: adult dialogical skills, patience, and good boundary skills.

To grow up, Slaves seek:

By far the trickiest to deal with are the Slaves. Slaves get their sense of worth either by being attached to "big people" or by taking care of others – or both. They frequently have no sense of self by themselves. In a way, they feed off others. They often encourage competent people to become tyrants. They certainly often encourage needy people to stay needy or become more needy. They experience shock when powerful people don't give them orders, when needy people turn down their offers to help.

A particular shock for Slaves is when you ask them about their point of view. They often tell stories about childhood, describe the behavior of all the people in a situation and never think to mention how they experienced the situation. This is the realm of codependency and it is very, very addictive. They seem to alternate between listening absorbingly to someone and doing things to take care of others.

In order to mature, Slaves seek someone who will lovingly help them blossom: develop their sense of self – who are they. This is very hard work for them as they often put this development on hold when they were tiny children, and they have become very skilled at avoiding it. And so the person they seek must be lovingly patient and reliable. Oh, and this person must not act as a Master or a Passive-Master. And while all that is going on, they also need to learn the usual mature relationship skills: adult dialogical skills, patience, and good boundary skills.



The View from a Friend

In this section I am going to talk about how to approach Masters, Passive Masters, and Slaves from the point of view of an outsider, one who is witnessing Neotaneous (childlike in an adult) behavior, but who is not necessarily a target of, or partner in, it. This then is the view of the tasks from

Friend/Friend position looking across at the world of Master/Slave. I am also going to start with an assumption. I am assuming that the reader is a practitioner of 1) adult dialogical skills, has 2) plenty of patience, and 3) has good boundary skills.

Note: I am disappointed to report that, even about professionals, my assumption is frequently wrong. I have found that an amazing number of counselors, therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc. display considerable lack of mature relating skills. Be that as it may, I am trying to set an example, and doing my best.

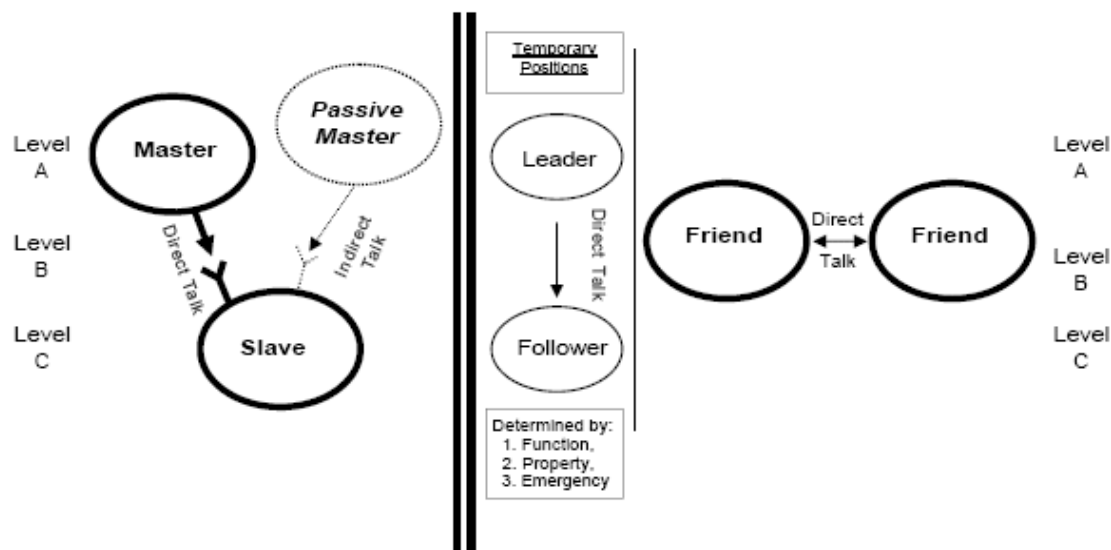


Figure 1 (again)

Masters: you need to interrupt their delusions about others, their blindness, and block all threatening behavior. Once this is done, Masters seem to shift over to Friend/Friend pretty easily and even to become a help in bringing their Slave partners along.

Break up Blindness: This is actually fairly straight forward. The thinking of a Master is fully of “I’m logical/they are stupid” or “I’m right, they are wrong” kinds of patterns. This is very self-centered and foolish, but you have to counter it repeatedly, and gently, until the Master begins to see the risk, the threat, in their own blindness and in secrecy. After that point progress for them becomes much faster.

- “No one in their right mind does that.” AI, “Of course their right mind is different from yours. Wonder what they think is going on.”
- “Why would anyone do that?” AI, “Great question. Let’s ask ‘em.”
- “My son won’t talk to me.” AI, “Of course. Let’s see if we can figure out why. The usual reason is that you are really unpleasant for him to talk to.”

- "My husband hit me. He's a beast!" Al, "Well, he has no business hitting you. Did you get safe? Now let's spend some time figuring out why he would end up acting so beastly."
- "She's a fool. Don't you agree?" Al, "Nope. I've found I never agree with anyone. Fact is, I've found that no one agrees with anyone at some level of detail."
- "This is a fact." Al, "Well, I have another point of view. Do you want me to share it or keep it a secret from you?"

This last is an awesome tool. I often lay it out this way. "If your partner is a) thinking something and they b) think this topic would upset you, would you want them to share it anyway or keep it a secret? Do you act as if you want your partner to share anyway or to you act in a way to encourage your partner to keep secrets from you? It's your choice."

Stop the Bullying: I mentioned above that you have to counter the blindness of Masters gently. The gentleness is required to reliably remove their habits of threat and intimidation toward anyone who shares their disagreement with them. Again, this requires a lot of repetition and, yes, courage. Your goal is to stand at Level B in the chart above when the Master slips into Level A. The principle is that you do not let them bully you or anyone in your presence, but you do not bully them. Of course bullying behavior covers a lot of material. The bottom line for me is any time a person fails to ensure that their audience is feeling safe, when they talk, I think of it as bullying. Bullying can be raising your voice, talking faster, standing up, interrupting, yelling, threatening to leave, and of course, MasterTalk. This covers quite a range of behaviors from the small to the very large. Since "you cannot make anyone do anything," this is a place where you may have to use all your great boundary skills. Many of these are just creative uses of TimeOuts.

- Al, "If you want to yell, that is ok with me, but you'll have to do it in the parking lot."
- Al, "I've asked you to stop interrupting your partner. You seem to have trouble doing that. Do you need a break in the hall? Or would you rather head for the parking lot?"
- Al rises and opens door to his office, "It's your choice, practice what I am teaching or take a break. I know you know how to do the other. Here I am teaching and modeling how to do better. It's your choice."
- Once in response to a physical threat to me. Al, "Repeat that again, or come closer, and I'll just tap this button. One of my phone speed dials is 911, and the police know about my office. We work together well. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when they come. It's your call."
- Sandra, "Al, if you wanna talk faster than I can listen or mirror, is it ok if I read a book while you chatter? I don't want you to think I can listen that fast."
- Al, "That sounds like an order. I never do what I am told. Been a rebel ever since American was formed. Sorry. Can you state your requests in a more

friendly fashion?"

- Al mirrors all Master/Talk and converts to dialogical form, or invites clients to mirror it, or invites people to resend it without the MasterTalk. If this happens a lot, I show I am tired and considers opening the door.
- Focusing on the positive side of sharing disagreement. Teaching people to say "Wow, tell me more" in response to hearing something they disagree with.
- Focusing on the negative [side of bullying](#).
- Focusing on validating their bullying behavior, where they learned it from, the fear behind it.

There are lots of these, since I face this often.

Passive Masters: You need to help them take responsibility for their lives and their relationships. You wean them and help teach them how to do it.

The trick in identifying Passive Masters is also the clue to the nurturing response to them. They state their needs and wait.... for someone to fulfill. Now, all of us were in this position once. This is the normal behavior of a kid. "Daddy, I'm bleeding." Wait, wait. "Mommy, there is something under my bed." Wait, wait. An adult, who does this seems to have usually temporarily forgotten that Daddy and Mommy are not around any more. I think they are laying out an invitation to the Caretakers of the world. Don't go there! [Your job](#): 1) do not be a caretaker and turn that "pause" into an invitation for them to look at their choices; 2) dialogue with them about quality choices, but leave them to their choice; and lastly, in order to build their self-confidence and self-esteem, 3) you have to [invite them again and again](#) to share themselves, their validity, while giving them lots of PreValidation and Validation. (I will speak more about this later.) By the way, I think these actions are a lot like good parenting behaviors for kids 8-years-old and older – certainly teens. Remember, you are helping them grow up.

1) Be Not a Caretaker. Instead Turn that Pause into an Invitation:

- "I feel stuck...." Al, "Yeah. um. How long have you felt stuck?"
- "Let me tell you my problem." Al, "OK. Love to hear all about what you've gotten yourself into."
- "I have no money...." Al, "Bummer. Being broke really hurts. And I am sitting here wondering how you are gonna pay me. How long you been broke? How'd you get that way?"
- "I don't know what to do...." Al, "Yeah. Tis tough. What are some of your options?"
- "I don't know..." Al, "That's not allowed in this room. ([Pointing to my sign on the Wall](#)) But you sure can share your ideas. What's your guess?"

2) Dialogue about quality choices, while leaving the decision up to them:

- "I might get a job." Al, "Great idea. What kinds of work have you thought about? What have you done before?"

This is all about the normal dialogical skills of Mirroring, Pulling, PreValidating and Validating. The trick is to be careful about boundaries. While sharing your thoughts, Passive Masters often try to put you the driver's seat. I find it best to resist that with a frequent "flick of the wrist."

- "Well, then I'll do what you suggest." Al, "Only if you choose to do it!"
- "Thanks for telling me what to do." Al, "Heck, I never want to tell people what to do. You just do what you think is right."
- "You're right. I'll do that." Al, "Only if you really think it right."

Slaves: You need to cut them off from "authorities who will tell them what to do" and from "needy people who will distract them. Guide them into self-responsibility.

- "I have to do that." Al, "Hm. Who says? and why would you want to do what they say."
- "I failed. Did it wrong." Al, "Oh. Who says it is wrong? What do you think?"
- "Am I right?" Al, "You'll have to decide that for yourself."
- "What should I do?" Al, "Damn, for me that is a hard one. What do you plan to do?"
- "I don't know." Al, "Sure, but what is your guess or your best hunch?"
- "I don't want to upset my wife." Al, "Yes, but is that what you are doing. Seems to me that what you are doing 'to not upset her' is upsetting her."
- "He wants me to do it." Al, "Ok. But what do you want to do?"
- "I'm just trying to do the right thing." Al, "Great! And what have you decided is right for you?"
- "I don't want to do the wrong thing." Al, "Not to worry. Whatever you do will be ok. Either it will work out well, or it'll teach you a lesson. Can't loose either way. So what's your guess about what to do."
- "I can't move till I know what is the right thing." Al, "Yeah. I get stuck too, at times. Still got to go ahead. So what way are you leaning?"
- "I have to take care of them." Al, "Yes, I hear that. Of course, sometimes taking care of people isn't the way to take care of them. Let's look at it.
- "I worried what they will do." Al, "Sure, but they will probably do what is best for them. That's their job. What do you want to do about it?"

Summary of the View from A Friend

The biggest challenge is to remain Friend/Friend, or Dialogical, while dealing with someone in any of these positions. The clue to dealing with childish behavior of your "partner" is to grow up yourself and stay Friend/Friend. The clue to dealing with a partner who is pointing to what they think is your childish behavior is to use their "criticism" as potentially valuable information about

your need to grow up and become Friend/Friend. Also I remind you, that the specific responses you use may have to shift quite a bit as the person moves from one position to another. Here's the overall list.

1. Don't permit bullying or threat in your presence.
2. Do not even pretend to agree, but share lots of diversity.
3. Never permit "right" or "wrong" talk that is not clearly owned.
4. Reliably invite self-responsibility.
5. Dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. PreValidate and Validate as often as you can.

Passive Malevolence

I want to share three last topics: Passive Malevolence, Ending Neotany, and What the World is Going On. This first topic seems so harsh. The next one seems so positive and the last topic feels hopeful. But as I have pondered them for about 4 weeks, my energy is constantly drawn to this first topic – Passive Malevolence. I see it so much! So often! The grief I feel when I see it is immense. I fear this is a source of so much tragedy in our homes, schools, and workplaces. Well, I had best get on with it. First let me share two topics that illustrate the Power of Passivity.

Passive Aggression

First let's look at this very common behavior. Passive Aggression is much talked about in the media. To me it is just "behavior that is irritating to others" for which the actor avoids or takes no responsibility. This is often "provocative" behavior and frequently it seems quite masochistic. It is very rare for me to run into someone who is aware of this kind of provoking behavior at the time they are doing it. Mostly this seems to be done by their unconscious, that stuff below the Unknown Wall of their Iceberg.

My most clear example of Passive Aggressive behavior I saw was in a woman who seemed late to everything in her life. She was late to church, to appointments, to work, to family functions, and especially late to entertainment events like movies or symphony concerts. She would commit to leave the house at 4:00 and be ready at 4:30. Her husband was driven frantic by this behavior. (Mind you, he was a punctual person and had been raised to be early to everything – church, movies, etc.) He went so far, for example, to tell her that the symphony concert began at 7:30, so that they could get to the concert before it actually began at 8:00. At one time in their lives, someone suggested that she get regular sessions at a beauty salon. To her husband's amazement and interest, she was never late to the hairdresser. What was going on here?

The simple answer was that she was, without consciousness or responsibility, revenging on people. She'd learned this when she was pretty small. As a kid she had a lot to be angry at, but expressing that anger was a taboo. She carried much anger in her "Pot" (see my paper on Emotions), her chronically held body energy. She felt anger toward many, many people, and her

anger was “leaking out” in this way. As a friend said, “She’s giving you the finger, while smiling, and doesn’t know she’s doing it.” This business of doing passive aggressive acts without being aware seems pretty common in our culture.

Denial

And this now brings us to the amazing topic of denial. My experience is that this tendency to do things and be unaware of doing them is very common. Typically situation is called “denial” by people who have poor boundaries skills, but I suggest that the label “denial” is really an issue of MasterTalk.

For example, I observe you doing something. I speak up by saying, “You are doing this.” I am saying it to a person who has no awareness of doing that thing. They say, “I am not doing it.” And we are off to the races in an argument of two sets of MasterTalk, not even coming close to sharing what we see or are unaware of.

My tendency is to believe that most people who “are in denial” are really just unaware of what they do and are used to avoiding self-responsibility and threat. Most of the people who talk about others “being in denial” are just MasterTalking. The woman in the story, when “confronted” would defensively either say, “I am not late!” (MasterTalk); “I am not very late!” (MasterTalk and minimizing the problem); “I can’t help it. That is the way I am” (avoiding responsibility).

I think it is relatively impossible to deal with Denial from within the neotaneous triangle of Master/Slave/Passive Master. From the mature position of Friend/Friend it is pretty simple. Example: I observe you doing something. I speak up and say, “I observed you doing this.” You respond, “I am not doing that.” I respond, “I didn’t say you are doing it. I shared my observation. Are you suggesting that I am not having the observation I am having?” And the pattern is broken.

By the way, the trick is to speak of what you observe and not your interpretation of what you observe. Say, “I heard you say, ‘shut up’ to that kid.” rather than say, “I heard you insult that kid.” Say, “I recall you saying you would be there at 4:00 PM, and I then I saw you arrive at 6:15PM,” rather than say, “You’re irresponsible with time.”

The Dark Side (Shadow) of Passivity: Passive Malevolence

While passive aggression is just letting off steam in a non-responsible way, Passive Malevolence I define as letting people get hurt, letting people die in a non-responsible way. This is really scary stuff to write about, because this behavior is so common. My purpose in writing about Passive Malevolence is to make its mysteries more clear and to invite people who practice this passive destructive behavior to shift toward being Dialogical – the right side of Figure 1, Friend/Friend. If you see someone doing what looks like Passive Malevolence, for heavens sake, do not shift into MasterTalk! Invite them into Dialogue and Friend/Friend with you.

Examples:

- those who stand quietly about on the street when another person is being mugged.
- those who says nothing when their partner beats their children.
- those who bring charges against someone for domestic violence, long after it has been going on.
- those who villify the perpetrator and glorify the victim in domestic violence.
- those who stand back when a child has a tantrum and do not stop it.
- those who complain about our politicians and who do not enter into politics themselves even to the minimal level of voting.
- those who stood by silently in Germany or Russia while millions of people were exterminated.
- those who watch violence in the house next door and who do nothing.
- those who see sexual abuse and who turn away.
- the family that experiences inappropriate sexual behavior and which villifies and/or abandons the first person in the family "caught."
- those who witness vandalism and say nothing.
- those whose children act out violently and who say/do nothing.

Facism

One particularly pernicious form of Passive Malevolence seems to be used politically quite frequently. I originally learned about this in a book by Wm. Reich MD called the [Mass Psychology of Facism](#), a book banned in the United States in the 1950s. As I understand it, this was the tactic used by the Nazi planners to get the German people to passively submit. The plan involves creating a myth of "the enemy" and manipulating people into being cooperative.

1. Start with a populace that is in distress
2. Using the communication media (propoganda) assure the people that they are not responsible for their distress and that some "bad" people are responsible.
3. Tell the people that if they help the leaders, their distress will go away.
4. Punish or eliminate those who do not "agree" with the message of the leaders.
5. Give the the people something to do while they quietly submit to witnessing atrocities.

Of course in the Reich's book this was all about the Nazi political machine that used the Jews as the "bad" people, and thus attempted to conquer Europe. But I have seen this tactic used over and over in national and international politics, religion, families, and in business. Sadly, it works.

End of Neotany: Becoming a Self

Growing up is quite a project. I think it is easier when surrounded by people who display adult behavior. Unfortunately, I believe, most "adults" I see do not display much in the way of adult behavior. So how do we help each other out?

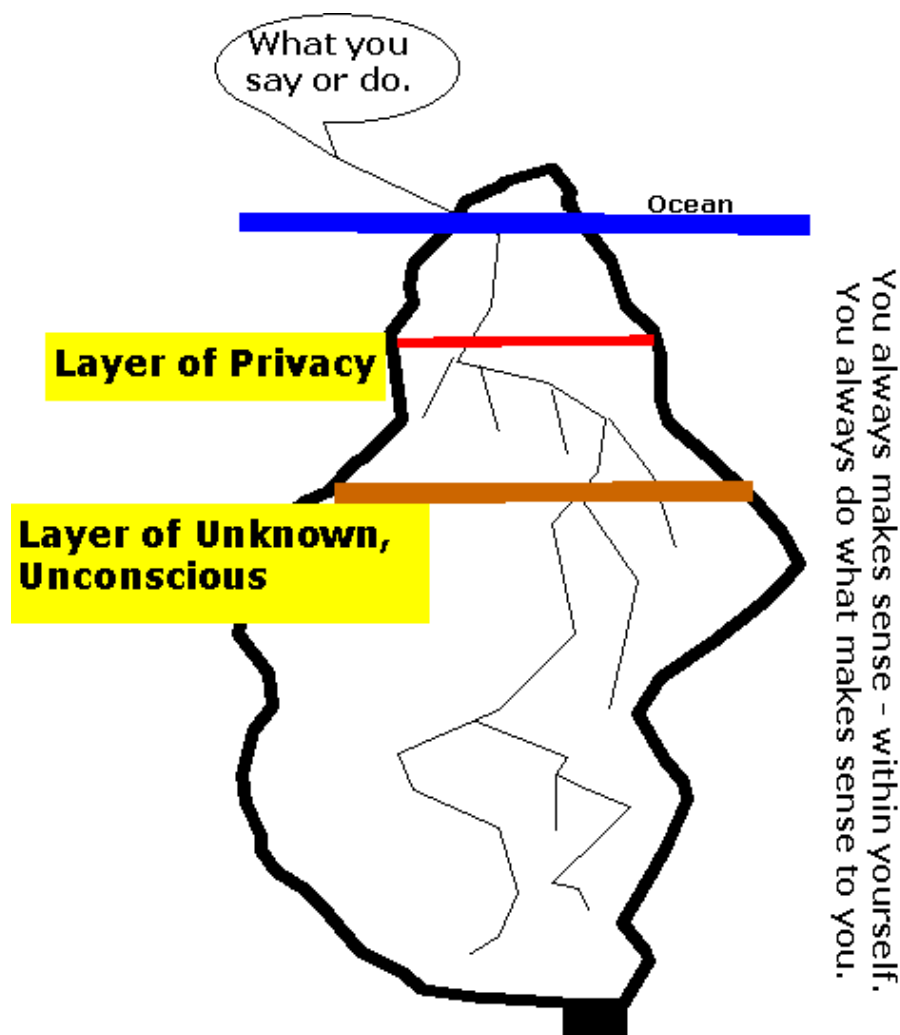


Figure 3

I have used the above picture to share my ideas about the layers of a self, how to relate to yourself and to others, and of validation and PreValidation. You might want to read my article on this before reading my comments below.

I believe that the most important task in growing up is in developing a full sense of self and a large dose of self-esteem. I will repeat a couple of my ideas here.

Self only exists in relationship to others. I have no self except as I am different from others. Thus being "different" is a critical skill in being a self. Boundaries and boundary skills are the critical component in starting to build a Self. These are the lines that separate "me" from others, and that maintain my integrity during interactions with others.

People do what they do because they are who they are. People grow and change as they learn new things. At any given moment we have integrity, whether we are aware of it or not. Humans are little sense making machines. We make sense all the time. We do things that are a logical result of the components within us at the time, whether we are aware of those components or not.

What this implies is that whatever you did yesterday, it was the best you could do given who you

were, your integrity, at the time. I think it is a complete travesty of thinking, plus a boundary invasion, to judge another person's behavior based on your values and beliefs. I think it is very valuable to compare other's behaviors to your behaviors as a way of distinguishing yourself from them.

An adult, a non-neotanus person, understands their own sense, is both confident and a bit admiring of who they have become and who they are. Self-esteem means "I like myself even when they dislike me." Here's a picture of this using the Iceberg metaphor.

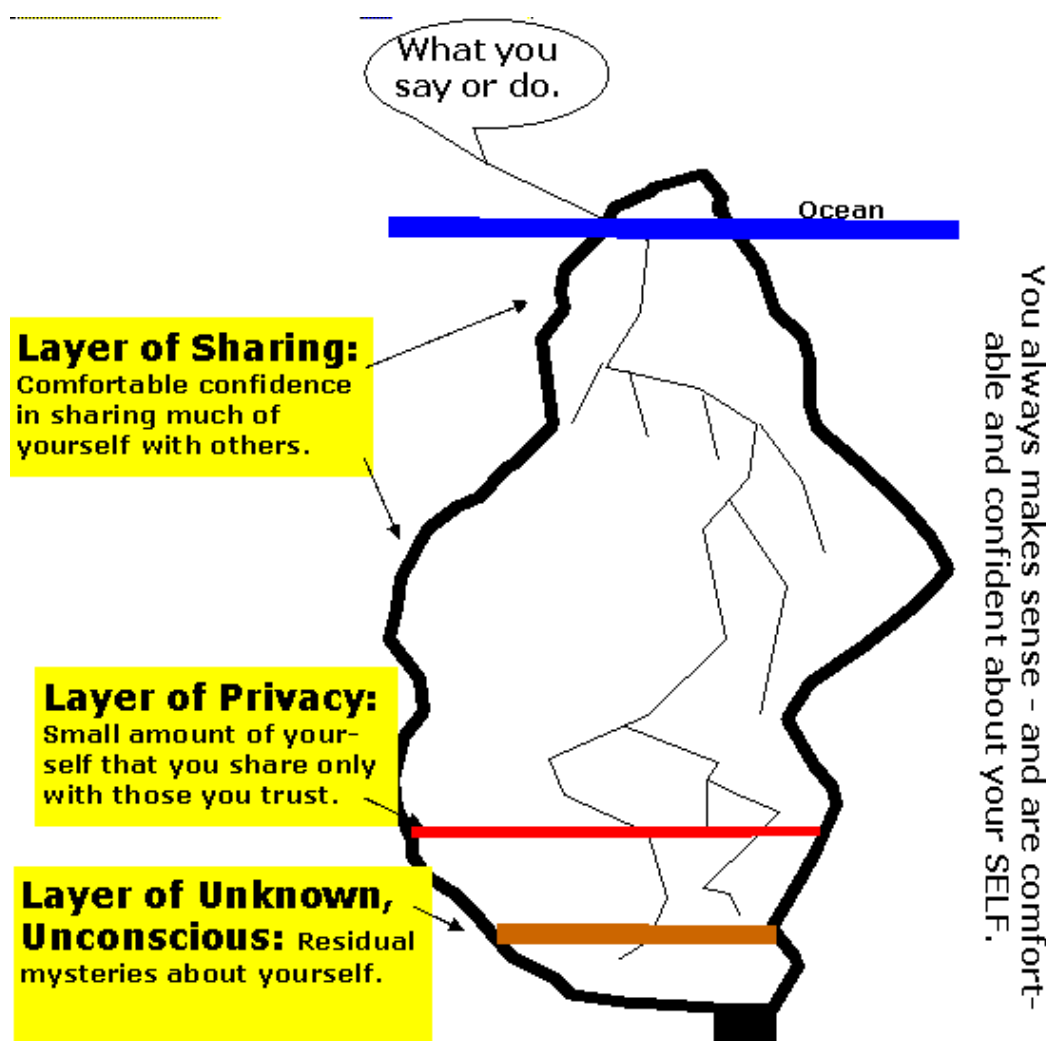


Figure 4

Of course this involves a great amount of self-discovery leading to a great amount of self-awareness. Fortunately this is normally a natural process beginning in childhood.

The problems occur when childrearing practices prevent this. The result is that much of the childrearing in the United States is fairly poor. A friend of mine from Africa used to describe the problem as children raising children rather than adults doing the childrearing.

Fortunately, this is all remediable. You can fix it. Good self-esteem is built by the

repeated application of good validation and PreValidation.

Most neotamous people (children and the childish Masters, Passive Masters and Slaves) look something like Figure 5 below. When you ask them about themselves they often look blank, or say, "I don't know." (By the way, I believe marijuana, THC, chemically produces the same effect.)

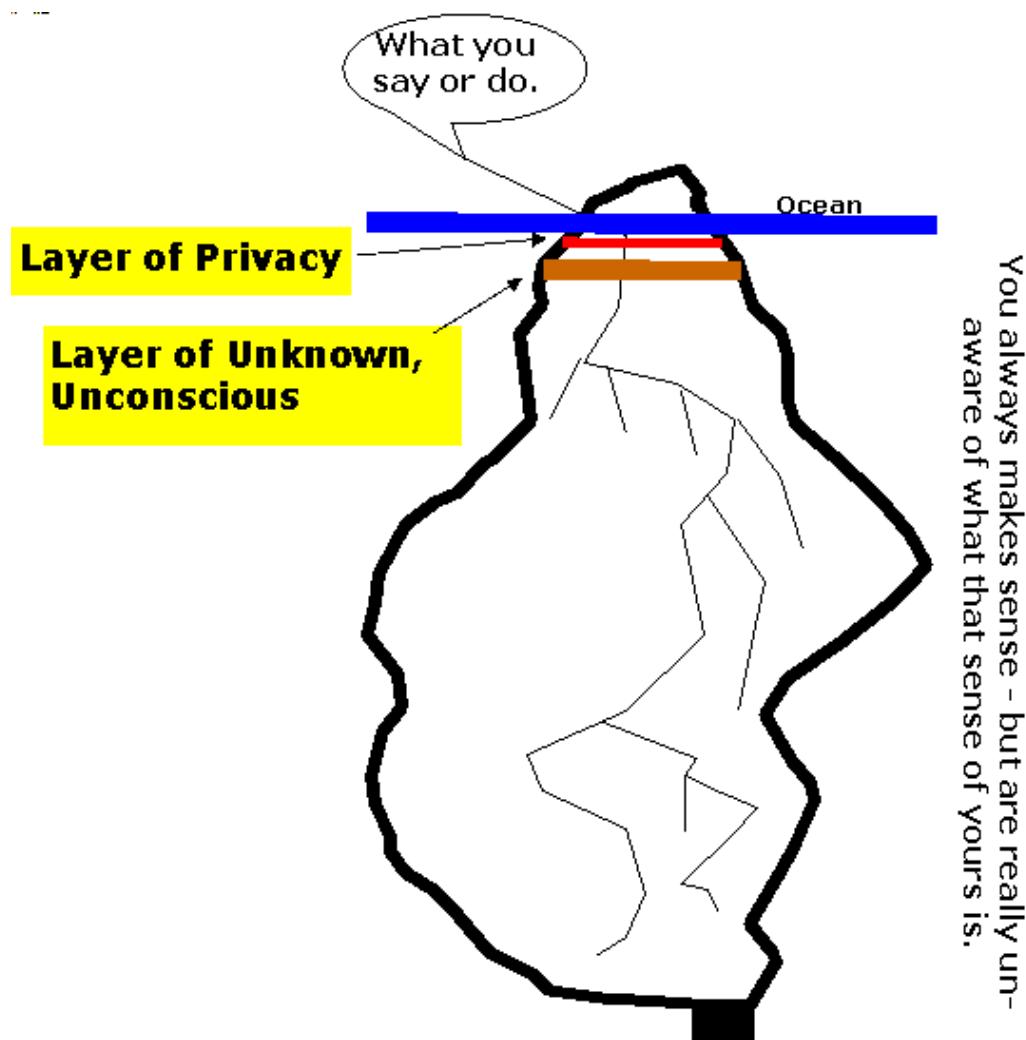


Figure 5

The remedial work is to move those two layers (Privacy and Unknown) far down into their iceberg.

Helping Others

What I have found is that develop a secure sense of self, another person is needed. Their role is crucial to your success. That someone must be a) interested in who you are - really, b) have good boundary skills themselves and c) be durable enough to stay with you as you discover yourself. And so if you want to be supportive to someone else in this process, be prepared. I

suggest you become an [expert at validation](#), confident in [seeing your own and other people's sense](#), and very good at [Art of Pulling](#). Also I suggest be able to monitor your own capacity so as not to overextend yourself. A good counselor, psychologist, psychaitrist, pastor, rabbi, etc. should have these skills. However, lots of people can learn the skills, can learn the skills, and be less expensive.

A great skill is to be tentative. You can share your ideas of who someone is, or why they do what they do, but you must do this sharing very gently. Your goal is to a) get them to share their own self-discoveries and b) share their delight. Remember you are the assistant in this process.

Also remember that each person has their own optimal speed of doing this growing up. If you do anything that comes across as "Pushing," I have found that it will tend to slow them down. So don't push. Learn to follow their progress at their speed, but be ready to invite.

The process of helping others blossom and flourish, is for me probably the greatest delight in my life.

Helping Yourself

Find a working partner who will invite you. Anyone who tells you "who you are," I suggest you avoid. Anyone who is durably curious and who retains the belief that "You make sense all the time," is a good candidate. Put up the signs I have made to help you around your house. Particularly good ones seem to be: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#). Many more are on my [page of Posters](#).

I suggest you get very good at [PreValidating yourself](#).

Take your time. Childhood takes years. And my experience is that the remedial work can take years also. A regular sense of progress is all you need. Learn to love discovering yourself.

Last week one friend asked me what I thought was the opposite of being Slave. I pondered for a while, since my model does not really point to opposites as much as it points to types of partnerships. What popped out of my mouth was, "I think the opposite of being a Slave is being a Child of God." He, being a minister in a church, nodded thoughtfully. Later that evening he told me that my answer seemed truly great. I undoubtedly will hear more from him as he takes his thoughts back to his congregation and shares.

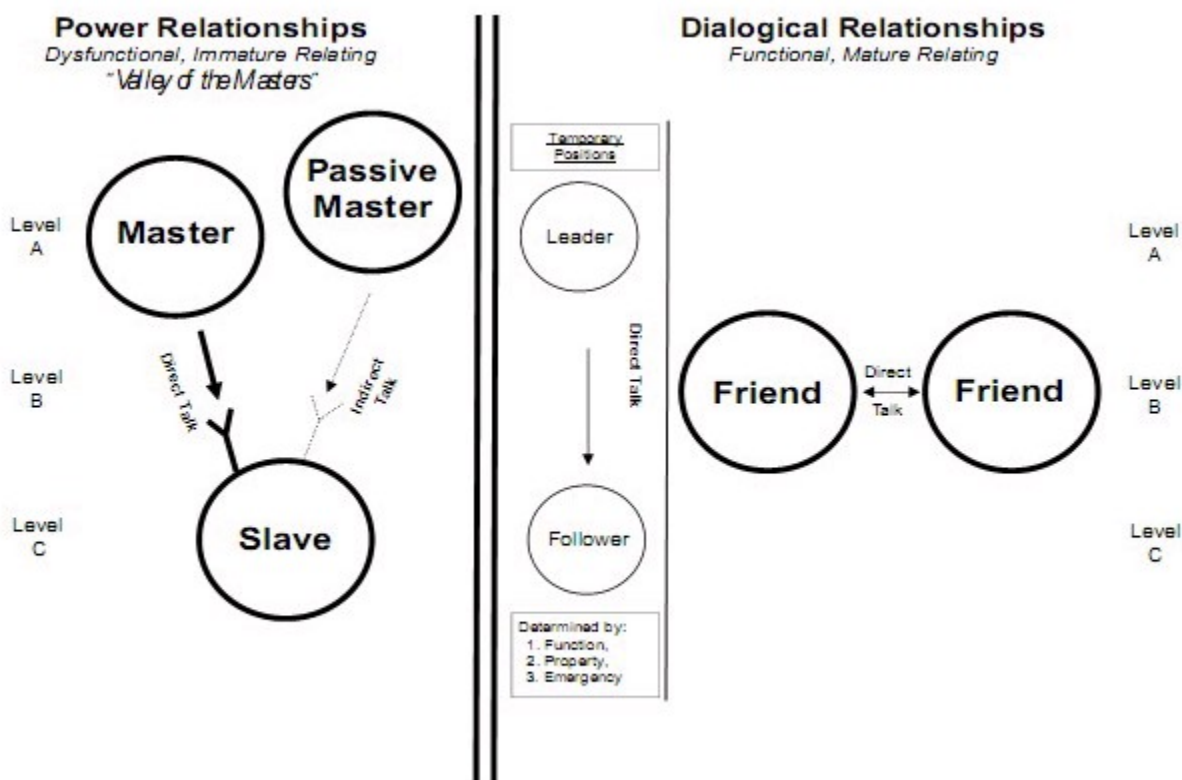
Passivity: In the foundations

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sat 03 May 2008 10:34 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Last spring in 2007, I took on the task of writing the advanced level material on the problem of Power and Control. Some of you are familiar with my original work on [Master/Slave](#) from 2002, and in the various articles on MasterTalk. Over a period of years experience and reflection lead me to the article on the [Power of Passivity](#). In it I try to ground the reader in the simple but ubiquitous logic of all those dysfunctional relationships that we find ourselves both surrounded by, and all too frequently, living in.

Lately I made some additional steps in creating some slides to look more closely at the dilemma facing us all – the behavior of the Slave. I presented these slides to a group of people who reacted so favorably that I want to share them even though the written material that surrounds them may not be complete yet. Here we go.

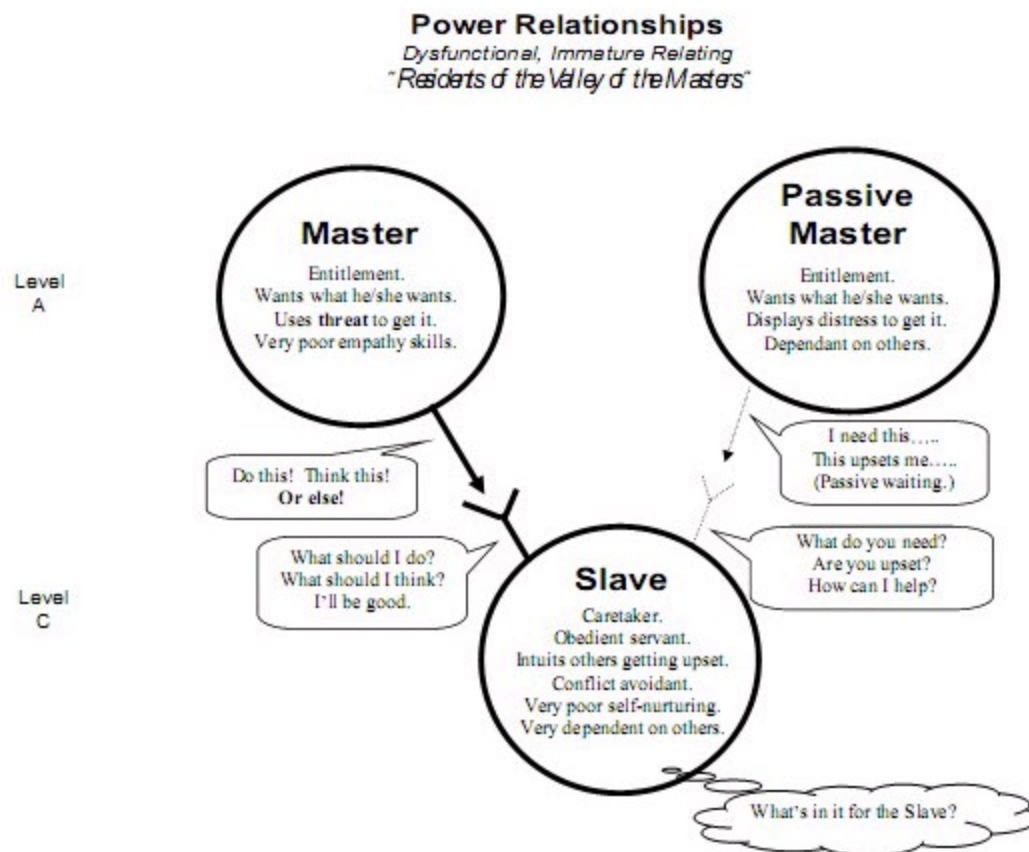
The Alternatives of Power-Over or Shared-Power



This is simply a more complete version of the chart I presented in the [Power of Passivity](#). I stress the two sides of the chart (Dysfunctional/Immature and Functional/Mature) and the three levels (Level A: Arrogant, Entitled, Superior; Level B: Equal, Fair, Collaborative, Respectful; Level C: Submissive, Subservient, Victim, Passive).

I believe the goals of raising children, forming and maintaining long-term relationships, and living together in communities all involve learning to reliably inhabit and preserve everyone's membership in the right side of the chart. And from that position I think we all work to support those on the left to come join us.

The Valley of the Masters



This new slide presents the dynamics of the dysfunctional, immature side. Each position is radically dependent on another. Connection between these voices is a matter of struggle for membership by contributing to the needs of others. Everyone participates fully. People can easily move between these voices. Each voice has its own etiology, its own logic, and its own remedies. This I have discussed in my previous paper.

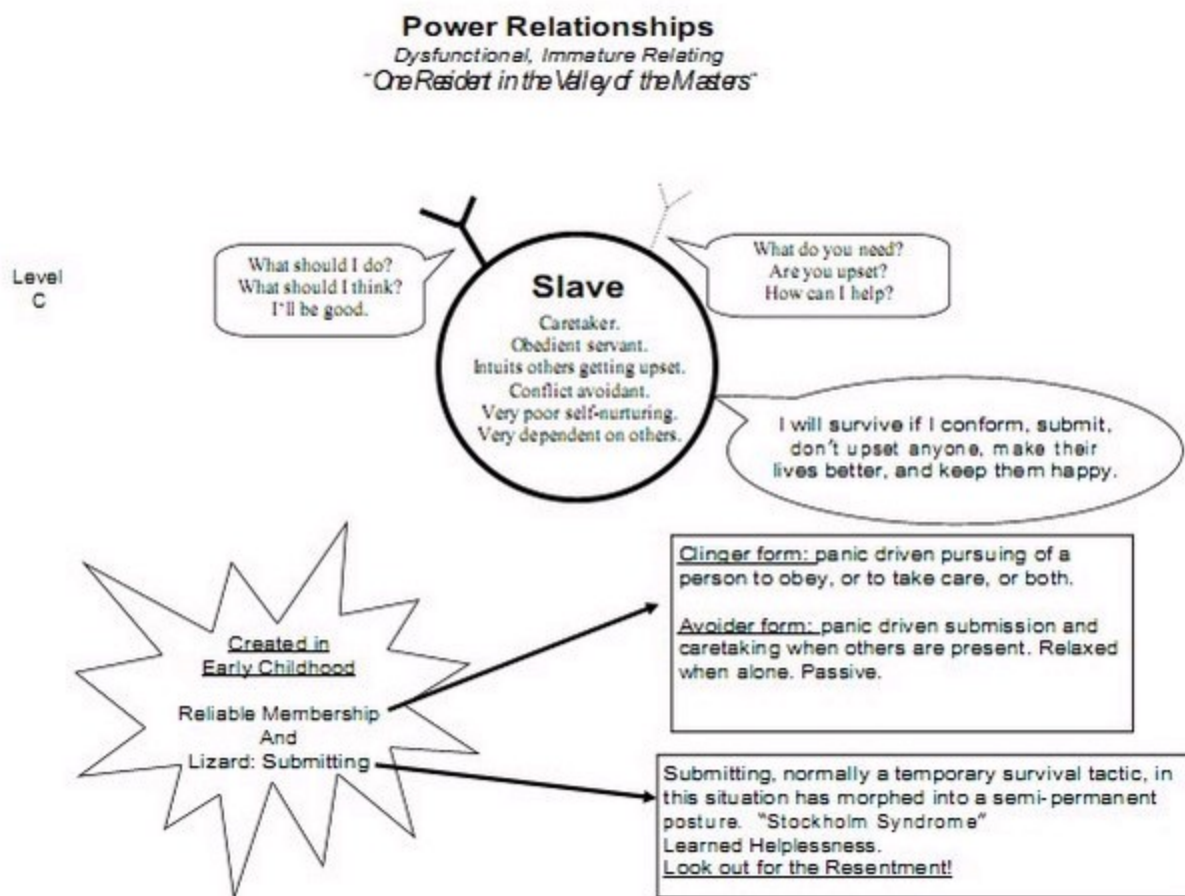
Note that there are only Two Levels here: top and bottom. This set of three relational voices and only maintain their immaturity by either rising above or sliding under. The fundamental lack of fairness and equity creates great instability in a culture that professes democracy.

In the slide I hope I have captured the critical essences of each posture. As you can see the needs of the Master and the Passive Master are being met by the aid of the Slave. The Slave fully engages in this activity. I believe this simple formulation contains both the components of CoDependence and Victimicity that are so often spoken of in the self-help literature.

What this slide ends with is the question, "What does the Slave get out of all this?"

The Slave's Solution

This next slide is my current understanding of what is the motive of the Slave, and also represents a new look at the etiology of the Slave. It finally suggests two general types of Slave.



Following up on my work on the components of the Biological Dream, I believe the Slave is a creation of early childhood, primarily of sub-cortical impulses. This may be why the Slave is so resistant to recovery via Cognitive techniques. I think the Slave displays an early adaptation of the Lizard Brain to preference to Submitting as the primary (only?) survival tactic. My guess is that the child learns more or less completely that Fleeing, Freezing and especially Fighting will not work in their caretaker home. The only thing that works is Submitting. (I think this would be supported by studies in Attachment Theory.) Thus the Slave creatively solves its trouble by Submitting as the way to Life. My experience is that most chronic Slaves I have met were preoccupied with "caretaking" of their parents before they were the age of three.

With the development of the mid-brain impulse of Reliable Membership, this leads more or less to two forms of Slave.

The Clinger form of Passivity seeks connection, with more or less panic, and when attachment is "achieved" begins to submit in order to survive.

The Avoider form of Passivity is passive about connection. When alone this person functions peacefully with no panic. When another appears they immediately begin to submit as a way to survive.

This slide ends with an anxious note. Since Submitting always generates Resentment, "What happens to all the Resentment that Slaves will develop over the years." I recall a small note in the book Man in the Trap by Elsworth Baker MD. He noted that in doing deep therapy with these people, the therapist should remember that they have a "viper in them." Hmm. My experience is that Slaves are usually struggling with either unexpected temper difficulties or passive aggressiveness.

Makes for interesting thinking. Where I want to go next is toward suggesting plans and techniques to apply if you

are a Slave, or if you are partnered to a Slave, or if you have a Slave in your practice.

Enjoy.