

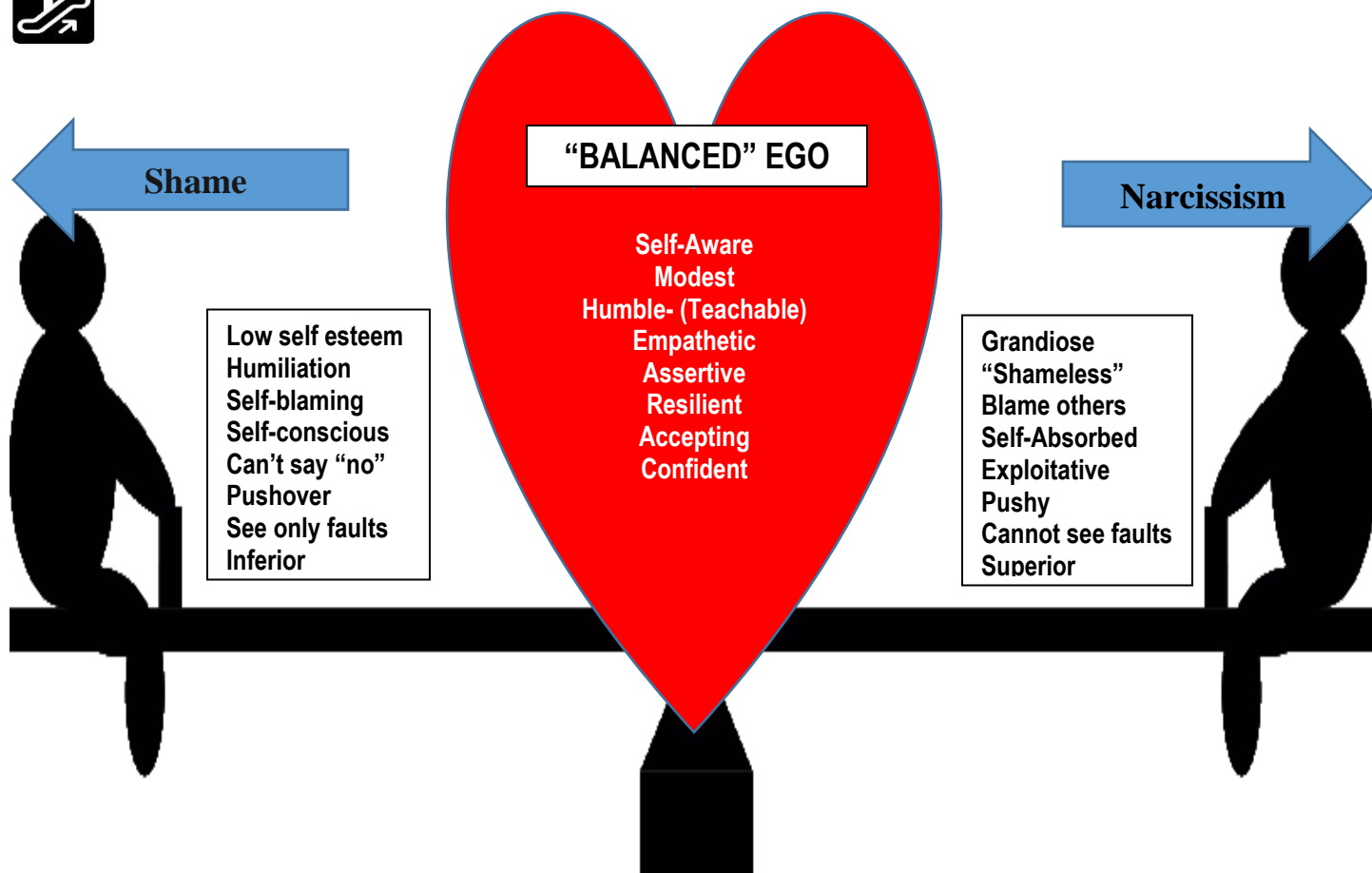


## Maintaining a Balanced Ego

**Opening Exercise** - : Read each statement and honestly pick the answer that would most likely be true for you. (This is not a real test it is just a warm up to get you thinking about this topic)

1. ***You get caught making an embarrassing mistake:***
  - A. Make up a lie or blame someone else for what went wrong
  - B. Feel humiliated and try to think of ways to run from, avoid or escape the situation
  - C. Even though you are embarrassed, admit that you screwed up and apologize as needed
2. ***Someone gives you a complement***
  - A. Go and brag about it to other people making sure people know how good you are
  - B. Think of reasons to yourself why you don't deserve it or why it isn't really true
  - C. Accept it, allow yourself to feel good about it for a while then move on
3. ***Someone in an authority position (like your teacher or boss) gives you constructive criticism***
  - A. Think angry thoughts about that person and how they don't know what they are talking about
  - B. Feel ashamed or embarrassed and feel a blow to your self esteem
  - C. Try to see it from that person's view and just think of ways you can improve for next time
4. ***Someone you recently have gotten friendly with is asking you for more favors than you can handle. (Like bumming rides or borrowing money for example)***
  - A. Tell the person off or just be rude to them so they leave you alone
  - B. Make up lies or excuses and try to avoid the person
  - C. Politely just tell them "no" in a respectful way
5. ***You get involved with a project and you put a lot of time into it but it feels like you are failing as it just isn't working out as you had planned***
  - A. Get angry at everyone else involved for not doing their part to help you enough
  - B. Feel depressed over failing and look for ways to quit and completely give up
  - C. Allow yourself to be sad for a short while but quickly start bouncing back by using the failure as a learning experience
6. ***You take on a responsibility that you think you should be able to handle but soon you find yourself overwhelmed and in need of help but you are embarrassed to ask***
  - A. Tell everyone you are doing great and then just come up with scams or schemes to avoid your problems or to dump off responsibilities on other people
  - B. Tell everyone you are OK but then suffer in silence hoping that someone will see you struggling and then come rescue you
  - C. Humbly ask others for help by admitting that you are struggling and that you underestimated the situation

### Discuss Your Answers



**Analyze and discuss the above diagram by reviewing the following:** (Keep in mind that it is OK to be honest as nobody is perfect and most people tend to lean toward one side of the seesaw or the other)

**Notice how both extremes, to the left and the right are unhealthy.**

- **Self-image** – We all know that chronic low self-esteem can be a problem, but the other extreme of being grandiose is also not so great either. Being grandiose means – “having an exaggerated belief of one’s importance – pretentious, pompous, overblown” Both an inferiority complex or a superiority complex are both extremes that should be avoided
- **Embarrassment** – Being easily humiliated or overly embarrassed is no way to go through life but the other extreme of having no sense of embarrassment (being shameless – “brazen, unprincipled, immodest”) can also cause a lot of problems (To conceptualize think of some shameless reality TV personalities that repeatedly make a fool out of themselves. It may be fun to watch but it’s a tough life)
- **Blame** – Constantly blaming yourself is hurtful (self-blame) but the other extreme of constantly looking to blame others without accepting responsibility is a sure fire way to prevent personal growth
- **Self-Awareness** – To be self-conscious means to constantly be excessively aware of how others may perceive you which is very anxiety provoking and difficult to live with. The other extreme of being self-absorbed is to be preoccupied with your own thoughts, feelings and opinions to the degree where you don’t care at all about what anyone thinks, just yourself – which also can lead to interpersonal problems. Constantly focusing on your own faults leads to depression but the other extreme of being unable to see any of your own faults prohibits making progress in life (living in denial)
- **Boundaries** – Lacking assertiveness (or having difficulty saying “no”) can cause a lot of stress in life, but the other extreme of being exploitative – unjustly or unethically taking advantage of others for your own personal gain also leads to its eventual share of life problems



*\*Warning* – Someone who is prone to extreme narcissism may not see anything wrong with the narcissism side of the seesaw diagram

**Narcissism** – noun – inordinate fascination with oneself. Excessive self-love; vanity – Self-centeredness, smugness, egocentrism

### **Maintaining a Balanced Ego – Final Discussion Questions:**

- Which side of the seesaw diagram did you tend to lean toward? Why?
  
- Check any of the following things that you feel that you may need to work on, then discuss as a group:
  - Make an effort to be more self-aware, to learn about myself including acknowledging both my strengths as well as areas that I need to improve
  - Improve my self-image by making an effort to look for the good in myself
  - Learn to be more humble by learning to tolerate and accept other people's advice and feedback without getting defensive
  - Try to stop blaming others for my problems and instead focus on how I can be more personally responsible for bettering my own situation
  - Try to be less worried about what others may be thinking about me so that no longer holds me back from trying my best
  - Try to be more conscious and understanding about people's feelings so that I don't just impulsively say or do insensitive things to hurt others whom I care about
  - Learn to set appropriate boundaries and say no when needed
  - Other? – After doing this activity is there anything else you can think of that you need to work on?

**To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.  
William Shakespeare**