


**BULLYING PART I -
WHAT'S REALLY GOING
ON?**

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*"Building the Capacity of the English School Boards
of Quebec"*

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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM



the Maturation Key

the Vulnerability Key

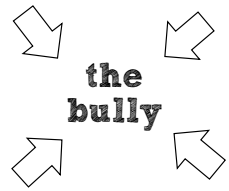
the Attachment Key

Gordon Neufeld, PhD

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FOUR PREVAILING EXPLANATIONS

the 'power imbalance' thesis the 'learned behaviour' thesis



**the
bully**

the 'empathy failure' thesis the 'sense of entitlement' thesis

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an attachment-based explanation

- background information -

1. We are all creatures of attachment.
2. Attachment is our preeminent need and the most powerful force in behaviour and personality.
3. Attachment is orchestrated by the limbic system of the brain.

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an attachment-based explanation

4. The **primary purpose of attachment is to facilitate dependence and care-taking.** Attachment is not about egalitarian relating but about hierarchically arranged interaction.
5. In keeping with the purpose of attachment, there are two basic sets of attachment instincts – **alpha** instincts and **dependent** instincts, and two basic drives – **seeking** and **providing**.

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seeking

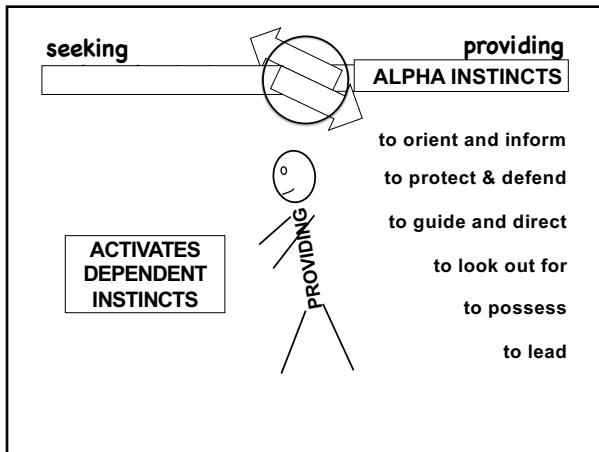
DEPENDENT INSTINCTS

- to get one's bearings
- to seek assistance
- to look up to
- to belong
- to follow
- to look for guidance

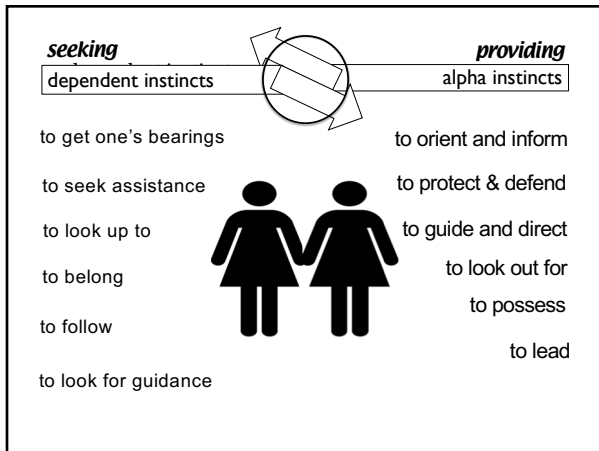
providing

ACTIVATES ALPHA INSTINCTS

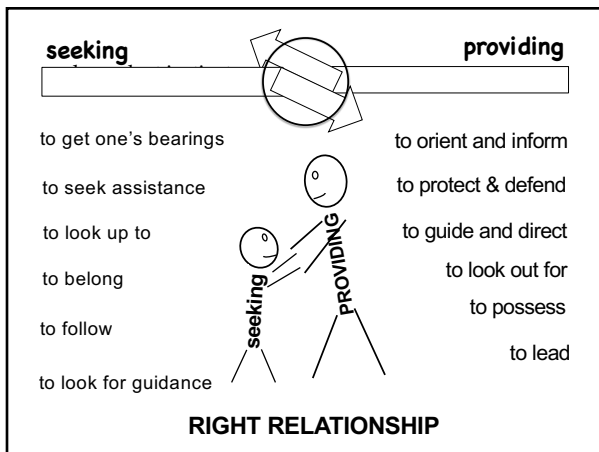
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an attachment-based explanation

6. These alpha and dependent drives are meant to **BE FLUID AND RESPONSIVE TO THE SITUATION AND RELATIONSHIP** but can become stuck, called **Alpha Complex**

- Bossy, controlling, demanding
- Seeks to be on top
- Difficulty taking direction
- Driven to trump or have the last word
- Shows superiority – “know it all”

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7. To fulfill the ‘provider’ role, our limbic system must be able to move us to ...

... assert dominance
 e. g. to take the lead, to take control, to give orders, to demand deference, to command attention, to get on top of things, to be in the know, to provide answers, to trump interaction, to have the last word

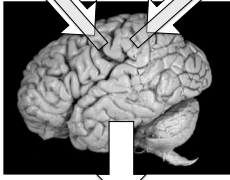
... assume responsibility
 e. g. to make things work for, to feel guilty when, to feel badly when, to fix things for, to make things better for, to feel remorse concerning, to make sacrifices for

... care for and to care about
 e. g. to be concerned about, to help, to bear the burdens of, to give assistance to, to meet the needs of, to provide what is needed

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8. In order to serve the role of ‘provider’, our **attentional mechanisms** are sensitized to signs of vulnerability and challenges to our alpha position.

<p>PERCEIVED VULNERABILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fear • upset • naïveté • wounds • confusion • weakness • defenseless • helplessness 	<p>PERCEIVED ALPHA CHALLENGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking back • lack of respect • lack of deference • lack of submission • lack of compliance • lack of conforming • show of superiority
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Moved to Assert Dominance, Assume Responsibility, Care For and Take Care Of

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an attachment-based explanation

9. **Humans are easily wounded.** If one's vulnerability is too much to bear, defensive filters are activated which **numb out the more vulnerable feelings** and their corresponding impulses.

10. The emotions and impulses associated with **caring** and **responsibility** are much more vulnerable than those associated with dominance.

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Vulnerable feelings more likely to be defended against

- feelings of shyness and timidity
- feelings of embarrassment including blushing
- feelings of shame (that something is wrong with me)
- feelings of futility (sadness, disappointment, grief, sorrow)
- feelings of fulfillment (joy, delight, enjoyment)
- feelings of dependence (emptiness, neediness, missing, loneliness, insecurity)
- feelings of appreciation (thankful, grateful, indebted)
- feelings of caring (compassion, enthusiasm, devotion, concern, treasure, invested in)
- feelings of alarm (apprehension, anxiety and fear)
- feelings of responsibility (guilt, remorse, to make things better, protective)
- feelings of woundedness (hurt feelings, anguish, pain)

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This leads to a situation where **only the QUEST FOR DOMINANCE remains.**

~~... **assert dominance**
e.g. to take the lead, to take control, to give orders, to demand deference, to command attention, to get on top of things, to be in the know, to provide answers, to trump interaction, to have the last word.~~

~~... **assume responsibility**
e.g. to make things work for, to feel guilty when, to feel badly when, to fix things for, to make things better for, to feel remorse concerning, to make sacrifices for.~~

~~... **care for and to care about**
e.g. to be concerned about, to help, to bear the burdens of, to give assistance to, to meet the needs of, to provide what is needed.~~

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ALPHA AWRY

When the ALPHA ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS to DOMINATE are no longer TEMPERED by CARING and RESPONSIBILITY, the bully instinct is born.

- the quest for dominance becomes divorced from its intended purpose
- the alpha instincts become perverted
- as signs of vulnerability now evoke exploitation rather than care-taking

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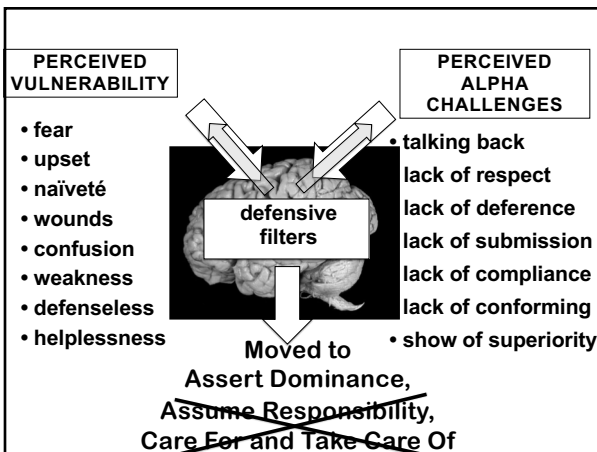
THE BULLY INSTINCT

to assert dominance by exploiting vulnerability

- through fear and intimidation
- through put-downs, shaming & humiliation
- through exposing and embarrassing
- through tricking and conning

But the bully remains highly sensitized to signs of vulnerability and to challenges to the alpha position

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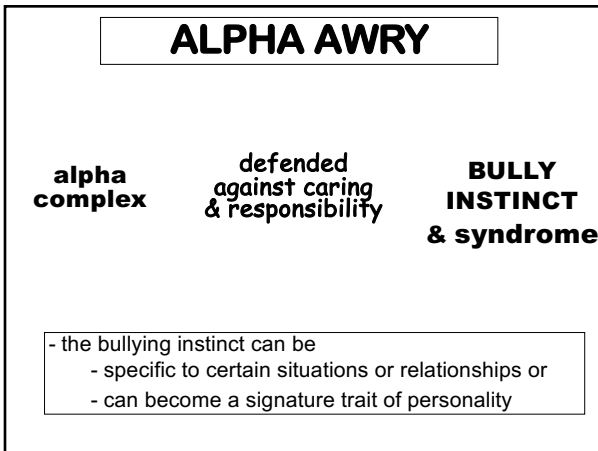


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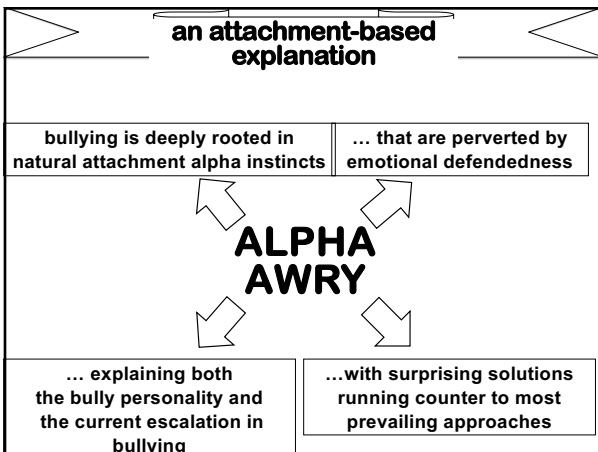
The 'alpha awry' thesis

the bully instinct results from natural alpha instincts perverted by emotional defendedness

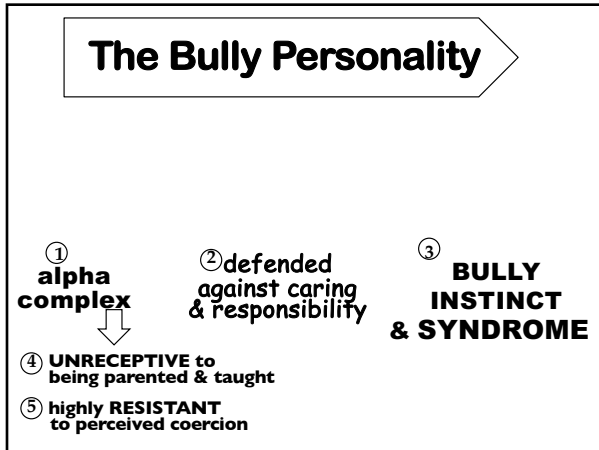
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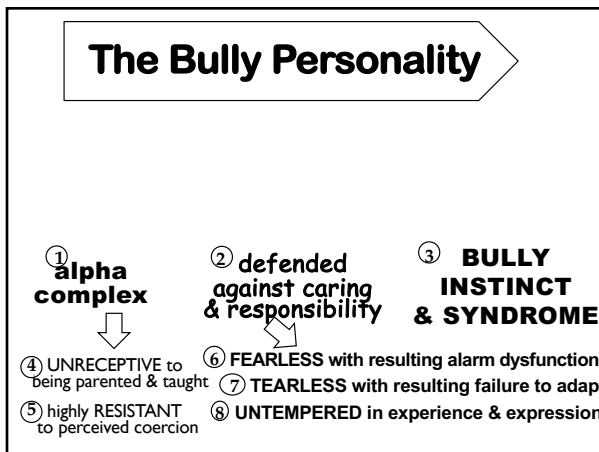
Resistant: *highly predisposed to resist the will of others, even those attached to*
- elevated counterwill

Why?

1. Given the bully's alpha instincts, it does not feel right to take orders from others, to be told what to do, or to do the bidding of others.
2. Emotional defendedness has prevented the bully from developing a will of his or her own, rendering the bully highly sensitized to the will of others.

Many bullies qualify for a diagnosis of oppositional defiant disorder.

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Fearless: *highly alarmed but defended against the feelings of alarm*

Why?

Feelings of alarm (eg, feeling afraid, scared, unsafe, anxious, apprehensive) are highly vulnerable feelings and can be lost when becoming defended against feelings of caring and responsibility.

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Fearless: *highly alarmed but defended against the feelings of alarm*

- **agitation without apprehension (less severe)**
 - doesn't talk about being unsafe or afraid, yet is hyper or tense as if highly alarmed
 - is careless and reckless and can't stay out of harm's way
 - attention is scattered and characteristic of a high state of alarm
- **attracted to what alarms (most severe)**
 - less tense and agitated but now engages in alarming behaviour and gets an adrenalin rush from doing alarming things

BULLIES ESTABLISH DOMINANCE BY, & GETTING A CHARGE OUT OF, ALARMING OTHERS.

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Tearless: *devoid of the tears of futility as well as the underlying feelings of futility that drive adaptation*

Why?

Feelings of futility (sadness, disappointment, sorrow, grief) are highly vulnerable feelings and are usually lost when becoming defended against feelings of caring and responsibility.

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Tearless: *devoid of the tears of futility as well as the underlying feelings of futility that drive adaptation*

- are unable to adapt to their circumstances and to what they can't change in their lives
- are unable to learn from mistakes and failures, including consequences, which only serve then to harden them further
- the lack of neural plasticity renders their brains unable to find work-arounds for any learning disabilities that exist (eg, high illiteracy rates)
- don't get the futility of demanding deference or of possessing someone or of commanding attention or even of 'raping' love

BULLIES ESTABLISH DOMINANCE BY, AS WELL AS GET A CHARGE OUT OF, MAKING OTHERS CRY.

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Untempered: *do not feel emotional discord*

Why?

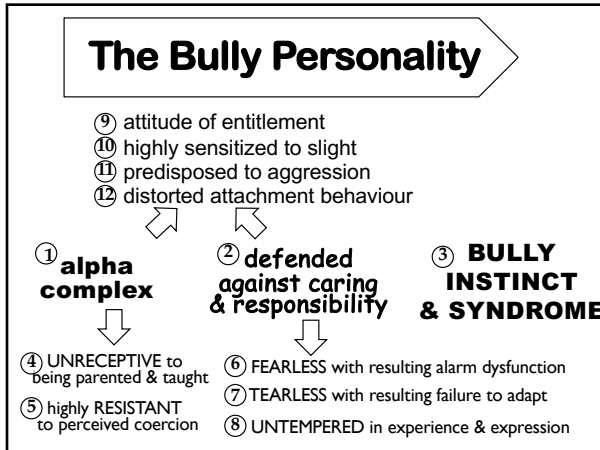
1. Their emotional defendedness has prevented the prefrontal cortex – the mixing bowl of the brain - from developing the capacity for mixed feelings.
2. They are also defended against the vulnerable feelings that would normally temper their instincts and impulses (caring, alarm, futility, responsibility).

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Vulnerable feelings more likely to be defended against

- feelings of shyness and timidity
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- feelings of responsibility (guilt, remorse, to make things better, protective)
- feelings of woundedness (hurt feelings, anguish, pain)

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Entitled: *must get their own way*

Why?

1. Forcing one's own way is a typical (although insensitive) alpha method of establishing dominance.
2. Bullies **don't feel taken care of** so they feel **they must take care of themselves**.
3. Bullies don't get futility even when it is encountered and so are unable to let go (lack of adaptation).
4. Bullies have not developed the resilience to be able to handle things not going their way (lack of adaptation).
5. Their perverted alpha instincts creates a demanding personality (roots of narcissism in adulthood).

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Sensitive to slight

Why?

1. Their alpha instincts sensitize them to any signs of disrespect or lack of deference.
2. Since males in our society show deference with their eyes, failing to avert one's gaze is often taken as an alpha challenge ('he looked at me wrong').
3. The more defended a bully is to the **rejection from those most important to them, the more sensitized to slight from those who do not matter to them.**

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Distorted attachment

- *intense, superficial, depersonalized and wounding*

Why?

1. Attaching is vulnerable business and so the flight from vulnerability greatly affects how the bully attaches - superficial, depersonalized and lacking in emotional or psychological intimacy.
2. Bullies are more likely to **'back' into attachment**, using the negative polarity (i.e. repulsive end) of the attachment magnet to establish connection (e.g. repulsed by differences, creating secrets about, discounting as not mattering).

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The Bully Personality

⑨ attitude of entitlement
 ⑩ highly sensitized to slight
 ⑪ predisposed to aggression
 ⑫ distorted attachment behaviour

① **alpha complex** ② **defended against caring & responsibility** ③ **BULLY INSTINCT & SYNDROME**

④ UNRECEPTIVE to being parented & taught ⑥ FEARLESS with resulting alarm dysfunction
 ⑤ highly RESISTANT to perceived coercion ⑦ TEARLESS with resulting failure to adapt
 ⑧ UNTEMPERED in experience & expression

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the making of bullies

the conditions that can give rise to bullies

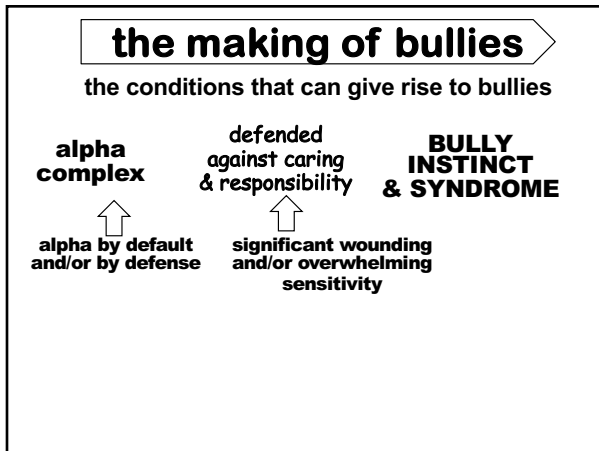
alpha complex **defended against caring & responsibility** **BULLY INSTINCT & SYNDROME**

↑
 alpha by default and/or by defense

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alpha by default	alpha by defense
<i>happens when adults do not assume an alpha posture or convey an alpha presence</i>	<i>happens when it does not feel safe to depend</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents reacting to their own backgrounds • failure of today's culture to script alpha posturing • weak or inadequate parenting • parents looking to child to fill needs • parenting on demand • egalitarian parenting • child-led parenting • parents looking for answers, rather than being their child's answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separation too much to bear • not feeling taken care of • being bullied by parents, siblings, peers or teachers • feeling abused or exploited • extreme vulnerability or overwhelming sensitivity • parenting practices that exploit a child's state of dependency • experiencing alarming situations or circumstances

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defended due to overwhelming sensitivity	defended due to wounds too much to bear
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genetics • prenatal stress • birth trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facing separation too much to bear • feeling too alarmed or alarmed for too long • experiencing being shamed or humiliated or feeling as if something is wrong with one

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the making of bullies

the conditions that can give rise to bullies
- peer orientation -

1. When peers become attached to each other, the attachment brain must arrange them **hierarchically**, placing some over others but without a corresponding role of responsibility for care-taking.
2. Peer interaction is the major source of wounding for children, regardless of whether they are peer attached or not. The more peers matter to each other however, the more they can get hurt by each other, often leading to a vulnerability too much to bear.
3. In the peer pop culture, vulnerability is shamed and invulnerability is venerated, even in the early grades.

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the making of victims

- peer orientation -

1. Some are predisposed to defer to and to depend upon their peers, rendering them highly vulnerable to the insensitive relating.
2. The highly dependent will be instinctively moved to expose their fears and their vulnerabilities in order to elicit care-taking and protection. This is highly provocative to bullies, creating natural prey.
3. The vulnerability of being peer oriented is typically too much to bear, leading to defenses that **create blind spots**, either drawing them into harm's way or rendering them unable to stay out of harm's way.
4. The emotional hardening renders them less resilient and adaptive, unable to handle adversity and unable to learn from their failures in keeping clear of the bullies.
5. Their peer orientation cuts them off from adult support, protection and shielding.

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the making of bullies

the conditions that can give rise to bullies

alpha complex

↑

alpha by default and/or by defense

defended against caring & responsibility

↑

significant wounding and/or overwhelming sensitivity

BULLY INSTINCT & SYNDROME

- dependence is an aversive state
- failure of adults to assume alpha roles
- attachments lacking natural hierarchy
- peer orientation

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