

Rackets

A Racket = a fixed way of being + a persistent complaint

Insanity - "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." *Albert Einstein*

Definitions

"A racket is an unproductive way of being or acting that includes a complaint that something shouldn't be the way it is." *Landmark Education*

"The word *racket* is used to describe a business that is based on the example of the 'protection racket' and indicates that the speaker believes that the business is making money by selling a solution to a problem that the business itself created (or that it intentionally allows to continue to exist), specifically so that continuous purchases of the solution are always needed." *Wikipedia*

Business = core need of the racketeer

Money/solution = payoff (see below table). Serves the need/business in an unhealthy manner.

Problem = some recurring complaint

Story and **Racket**: I am this way because...(something happened*) (*often external)

Story and **Possibility**: I am...(your choice) E.g. "I am kind and caring."

I see the world. What I see IN the world is my choice.

Some notes on rackets

- The mafia runs "rackets" - on the outside, a nice candy store. Façade. Looks great. On the inside, it is something dark and ulterior.
- A human being will trash their life to say "see what you did to me." Rackets suck the life out of life.
- In reality the racket has nothing to do with other people specifically (though we often think it does). That person is simply the latest victim.
- Rackets are often a private conversation in your head.
- With a racket, you setup shop; it is a consistent and recurring experience. Not a one off - that's a story. Stories can be equally damaging, even as a single occurrence.
- Being upset about the same thing more than once is likely a racket.
- We are "swimming in a sea of opinions" - we are all immersed in our own opinions and meanings which we attach to events. Other people also have opinions which affect our own - where seas meet each other.
- Rackets come from a limited view of the world/people - everyone's view is limited, but, really consider, what's stopping us from being open to an alternative view?

When we run rackets, we do it for a reason (the payoff for ourselves), and with that we also incur costs to a happier, healthier life...see some examples below:

| <u>Payoffs (Avoiding Responsibility)</u> Our crack or heroin - it's an addiction |
|--|
| Being right/Someone else being wrong To dominate/Avoid domination Self-justify/Invalidate others I Win/You Lose |

| <u>Costs (Aliveness)</u> What we lose and strive for in life |
|---|
| Love/Affinity Self-expression Vitality/Well-being Satisfaction/Happiness |

Keywords (if you find yourself using these words, or judging yourself as so, think twice. Is it a racket? Judging yourself/others as... Using these words...

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| - Dramatic/traumatic | - Always |
| - The victim | - Never |
| - Justified | - Yeah, but... |

Example Situations

A racket is a particular type of story. A story is interpreted from an event, i.e. "my mother left when I was young" (event), "therefore I must be unlovable" (story). "I don't trust people, *because I am unlovable*, because my mother left me" (racket). (The italicized section is usually not present in the person's thoughts, or at least not expressed to others). The speaker's mother is to blame for the inability to form close connections. Ultimately, the 'victim' chose the story, and is running the racket on their mother and themselves. It's ALL her fault. Yes, she left, but it's ultimately the person's choice to decide what that means.

Potential camp examples of rackets:

| What Happened? | Rackets | Another way of viewing it (possibility)* |
|--|---|--|
| Lack of variety in teaching clinics | "The PD doesn't consider my requests important," "I don't matter to them," "I'm not important enough." | The schedule considers many factors, not all requests can always be met. |
| New job position, without a clear job description | "These people are unorganized," "I don't know what I'm doing," "It was explained to me and I still don't get it," "No one cares about me and my new role." | "It is my responsibility to continue seeking clarity and excellence while taking the initiative to get things done that I see need doing. I have the opportunity to help define this role at camp and some power in making it what I want, and use my initiative." |
| Campers are struggling to get along/interact with one another effectively | "I am frustrated by their behaviors and it's stressing me out," "I'm not capable of this." | Opportunity/challenge for success counseling, for bringing campers together and creating an exceptional week for them. |
| You're tired | "The schedule is impossible," "This is too much," "No-one can survive this and be happy and healthy here," "I can't write good PLs in this amount of time." | Opportunity for learning or testing new time management skills and re-evaluating priorities. |
| In staff training, you are placed into cabins with staff without your significant other or close friends | "I need my own space and more time," "If I can't spend my nights with ___ in staff training, I won't be happy in the summer because I won't have that option then." | The challenge and opportunity of community building, interacting with new people, experiencing being in a cabin as campers are and understanding their schedule of embers and wake-ups. |
| A community member needs driving somewhere on time off, nobody volunteers to take them | "We're all horrible human beings," "selfish: where is the sense of community," "I'm disappointed in you all." | Prior commitments may be standing in the way, personal desires for "down-time," opportunity for discussion - what can be re-prioritized, can we get a cab for them (this helps them out and meets their needs without re-prioritizing)? |
| A counselor is struggling to keep up with the work & the VL is tired from the time spent helping them, so takes some time off from a meeting | VL saying to themselves or others: "This staff member is behaving this way, therefore I'm justified in behaving this way." | Be how you would like to be and create the change you would like to see. Live with integrity. |
| A conversation happened | "I am not satisfied/content/happy because the conversation did not go my way, or the way that I wanted it to go." | We have different viewpoints, and this is an opportunity to see someone else's view. Consider not swimming in your "sea of opinions." |
| Someone says: "you're wrong"/"you don't get it"/"you don't understand"/"get over it" | "They're clueless. They don't care. They are mean." "They just don't understand/know me." | Create understanding. Create familiarity. Do nothing. Be who you want to be as if nothing was said; create you from you. Be compassionate. |
| I tried | "It didn't happen/result as I wished it to, so now I'm going to give up, or try less. Oh well." | Give 100% to positive visions of yourself and the world, and leave specific goals out of the picture as ends in and of themselves. |
| Agreement | "Lots of people agree with my interpretation of this, so it must be true and real." | Decide for yourself what is real, powerful, possible, and inspiring. MTI - Move, Touch and Inspire |
| In essence, "I was abused." (This comes in many forms - physical, emotional, verbal; when you were younger, recently or at camp...) | The Angel in Hell: Golden hearted person doing the "right" thing, saying the "right" things, and yet not feeling content in him/herself and relationships with others. Tortured, in hell, about how things are going. Often wonders, "I'm so good, and yet people don't love me enough," or "I'm acting with such peace and integrity and yet people are mean to me; I don't get it; what's wrong with these people? Maybe something is wrong with me?" | Seeing all the things in yourself that are not attached to negative feelings and lack of contentedness. There is no meaning to anything, in the sense that we create all meaning. Keep being the change you wish for the world and yourself. |

* note that the possibility is also a story, simply a more positive one, among many positive choices.

Right/Wrong

Consider that there is no right and wrong. We create right and wrong in our own minds, and that varies from person to person. Some things are widely agreed upon, for example, murder. Communities also generally agree on what they collectively believe to be right and wrong; they create their "rules." (Just like at Camp Augusta).

Richard Rorty, contemporary philosopher, makes this point: "We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there - that is not our creation - is to say that most things are the effects of causes and do not include [us]. Truth, however, cannot be out there - cannot exist independently of [us]."

"The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own-unaided by [language] of human beings-cannot. [If] we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of the reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it and that [we are] created by [language], then we should at last [know] that truth is made rather than found. The world does not speak. Only we do."

Think about how you feel when someone does something that you consider to be wrong (not including the more universally accepted wrong-doings). Does it affect how you feel? Now consider that that person did not intentionally mean to hurt you, and that they were acting upon some of their own stories. By making them wrong, what are you creating? Negativity. Even if they did intentionally mean to hurt you, you get to decide what meaning/story you want to attach to that.

Lets look at a camp example. You asked one of the PDs yesterday to not schedule you for the Yuba today. You checked the schedule and you are on the Yuba. The stories you may tell yourself are that A) the PD didn't listen to you, B) they don't like you, or C) they don't see your request as important. Therefore "**Your requests are not important to them**" (*internal dialogue: ask yourself "is this a racket?", "am I making myself a victim?"*). With that, you go and sit next to your friend and tell them "I'm so pissed off/depressed/angry/sad; I'm on the Yuba again today after I requested NOT to be. The PDs **never** take me seriously; they're doing a terrible job, and running those clinics over and over again is just not fun anymore." RACKET

Other possible realities (not all of them, there are potentially a limitless number):

1. One PD heard your request, but maybe it didn't make it to the other PD for scheduling. If you talk to them about it, they are likely to realize they had a communication breakdown and can learn from their mistake.
2. They didn't have any other option for scheduling for that clinic, and they were looking for you to try and explain but they haven't caught up with you yet.
3. It was really the only way to make the schedule work today.
4. They do dislike you, and are intentionally trying to make your life difficult.

Possibilities 1-3 are likely to leave you feeling heard and understood. Yet, many choose to believe that it has something to do with them, and would rather believe the most negative option, 4. WHY?

- ◆ A survival mechanism - to preserve our identity of what we "know" to be right or wrong.
- ◆ It's an addiction - running rackets/having stories is our crack/heroin...TV shows and dramas are based on this sort of thing all the time and it's entertaining.
- ◆ To be right/for someone else to be wrong (see the table on payoffs).
- ◆ To create bonds/make friends - friends often agree with your rackets; it's very common to make "friends" that way (*ask yourself, how does this create a meaningful friendship and connection?*). Getting a lot of people, even literally millions, to agree with you does not = right/wrong.

The actual reality is not important in figuring out that you do have a racket. Recognizing that you have a racket is the first step. Which brings us to our next question...

How do I get rid of my rackets?

The most important thing here is in realizing that you are making a choice to believe something negative, either about someone else, or about yourself, and that this is based on a story. The key is NOT to change your story, but to recognize that it is a story and let it be. By trying to destroy our stories, deny them, and turn them into something new, we are not recognizing how valid they are to us as stories. When we read fiction, do we take truth from what is written? No, not usually, but it was still worth reading. Don't invalidate yourself by making yourself wrong. This is what is meant by "let it be." With that, you are giving yourself the power to freely move forward in communication/life and not keep in feelings of negativity.

Ways in which to do this:

- ◆ See the needs of the other (create understanding).
- ◆ Examine your attachments (see Spectrums of Consciousness piece).
- ◆ Imagine them as a fresh baby, and picture what their life might have been like to get them to this point (empathy). *Be careful not to create them as a victim in your mind.*
- ◆ Regret, sadness, and wishing things to be different are still options, without making anyone wrong or bad (i.e. you can still be sad about an outcome without it being yours or anyone else's fault).
- ◆ Also, one can seek restitution, although not be attached to it definitely occurring.

Rackets and NVC - how do they go together, how do they differ?

NVC, in a nutshell: *Identify feelings and needs, empathic listening, giraffe expression.*

Dealing with your Rackets/Stories, in a nutshell: *Identify them and let them be; see above 5 bullets.*

- How they support each other:
 - No blame or right or wrong.
 - Both seek a positively clear picture; a clear understanding free of judgment/blame/shoulds.
- How they differ from each other:
 - Expression of feelings and needs is part of NVC, but not necessarily so for stories/rackets - it's more of an internal process. With a story, one can let it be and then be free.
 - NVC is focused on creating understanding between two people or within groups.
 - In NVC, you come to an agreement after listening to each other's observations, feelings and needs and find a resolution that is mutually agreeable/acceptable. That agreement could be co-dependent, i.e. "I'll do this for you, if you do that for me." Co-dependency is also a racket; you need someone in order to fulfill a need for yourself.
 - Identifying stories/rackets is an understanding within and does not have to be shared with others to make a difference. Though sharing with others is an option to clean it up and commit to a happy and fulfilling relationship.
 - In NVC, you are sometimes holding the other party responsible for meeting your needs. If you do hold on to a racket, others are necessary in order to meet your needs. When you let the racket be, you do your work independently, and come to others "complete," without a desire to fill a need.

When recognizing your rackets, and letting them be, you are accepting responsibility for your own feelings. You are removing your attachment to the story, therefore questioning the origin of your feelings. Stopping your rackets is removing the element of blame that you place on others (a racket always contains a "should"). It gives you the freedom to not continue to suffer through your own choices. By letting go of a racket, you do change how you "feel," but the bigger picture here is the understanding of the power you ultimately have over your own feelings and how you see the world.

In the same situation, when using NVC and being the giraffe, you are explaining to the other party how an action of theirs affected your needs. You communicate your need (and perhaps feelings as well) non-

violently and choose how your feelings are affected by this need being met, or not. If you don't express yourself cleanly and become the jackal, you are running a racket on the other person.

Case study example that could happen at camp

E.g. Clare is really annoyed during staff training and is telling everyone that it sucks compared to last year. She thinks that she could have done a better job with it if she was planning training. Last year more people led sessions, and this year it was the same people and most of them were done lecture style. She told the PDs that "this training is terrible compared to last year; we would have been better off keeping it the same as last year." Clare didn't feel like anything changed after she mentioned this, therefore doesn't think her opinion matters. She isn't enjoying staff training at all.

Note the two elements here:

A fixed way of being = annoyed, powerless to change, not enjoying herself

A persistent complaint = that those organizing it don't care enough, and haven't put much thought into what they're doing; they didn't listen, staff training isn't fun

Clare is running a racket on the organizers of staff training. She is blaming her way of being on other people's actions. She is making assumptions about the meaning behind why things are different to last year; that either it has been intentionally changed to be this way (and to suck), or that they just don't care about the way people learn and what her thoughts are. She is also telling herself that her opinion doesn't matter since she told the PDs about this and nothing changed in her eyes.

What is she getting from this? Well, Clare is making herself right, and making others wrong. Would everyone else describe the situation in the same way as Clare? Likely not. Even if they did, she is still running a racket.

What is the racket costing Clare? Love, friendship, closeness, presence, peace, working friendships, learning opportunities. Many things. She is so convinced that the actions of others are affecting her time at camp, her ability to learn and her self-worth (being listened to). She's making herself "right" at the cost of happiness. "I could/would have done better."

What other options does Clare have?

- Clean communication. Clare expressed her feelings and expected things to change. She asked for her 100% (that being to change staff training) and she doesn't feel as though it happened. It is up to her to resolve her feelings. In expecting her 100% from asking for it, she is running a racket and holding resentment. It is also likely that she is projecting her feelings onto others since she is annoyed. Maybe through clean communication, she will find out that those organizing staff training are being purposely malicious. Right now, she's treating them like they are being malicious without even knowing. She's making them the enemy (see Enemy Image).
- Understanding that she is placing that meaning upon the circumstance, and she is the one who has power and control over her own life. Does anyone WANT to feel annoyed, powerless and "pissed off"? What are her options for choosing a more positive interpretation? Maybe last years' evaluations led to the new outcome, or that the person who led staff training was new and would have appreciated more help and input? It's possible that at short notice, changing staff training isn't possible. Maybe the returning to new staff ratio is different and required a shift in focus? What did Clare offer to bring to training when the email request was sent out for presenters & organizers in the spring?
- Work on a staff training Symposium discussion after Banquet, and continue to do so in the months following.
- Get in touch with the needs underneath her feelings. Perhaps mourn them not being met. Perhaps need shifting (see Needs and Wants Camp Augusta Style).