

# 21 The Tea & The Stick

This is a story told by Jay Carter, in his excellent book 'Nasty People'.

A learned Guru invites the pupil to tea. The Guru offers the cup of tea to the pupil, but in doing so says this:

“If you take the tea, I will hit you with this stick. If you don't take the tea I offer, I will hit you with this stick.

Now, would you like some tea?”



“Damned if  
you do,  
damned if you  
don't”

What would you do, if you were the pupil?

Most people take the tea, which means they will get hit by the stick. Their reasoning is – if you are going to get hit either way, you might as well have the tea...

A slightly smaller group refuse to make a decision – which the Guru interprets as saying no, and hits them with the stick....

Jay's answer is: take away the stick.

Both options – take the tea or don't take the tea – are only problematic because they come with the stick. If there is no stick, then either option is fine. His main suggestion for 'taking away the stick' is to leave the room. (This is also the answer the Guru wants).

This is of course a powerful metaphor for how some unhealthy relationships develop for some people, best summarised as “damned if I do, damned if I don't”.

Whatever choice person A makes, person B will find a stick to beat you with.

The only positive and healthy way forward is to deny the other person their stick

- ie refuse to be browbeaten or intimidated or in other ways belittled through the choices you make.

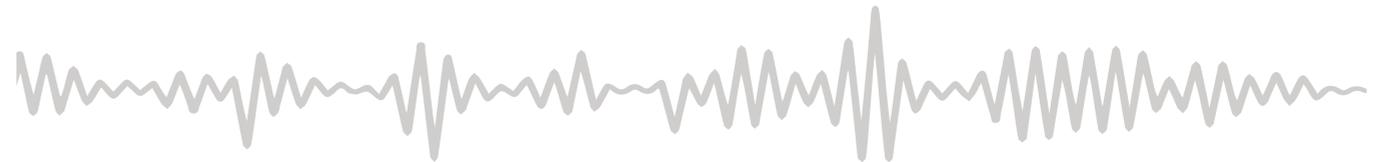
“If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten” (R. Kipling)

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