

# Workplace Psychopaths

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# Dr John Clarke

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- ❖ Consultant criminal profiler to NSW Police.
- ❖ Consultant to corporations re: workplace psychopaths.
- ❖ Counseling for victims of workplace psychopaths.



# Wayne

- ❖ Senior partner professional firm
- ❖ \$500,000 salary plus bonuses
- ❖ 75% staff turnover in his department
  - ❖ Good profits, partners happy
- ❖ “fittest in the corporate jungle where only the most brutal survive”
- ❖ “ruthlessly satisfied insatiable appetite for power and control



# Wayne

- ❖ Charming, very good talker but no facts
- ❖ Shifted emotion very quickly
- ❖ Learned helplessness – unachievable tasks
- ❖ Manipulative
- ❖ Call center his domain – sexually promiscuous
- ❖ Absolute lack of remorse
- ❖ Enjoyed psychological suffering of colleagues



# Wayne

- ❖ He spoke with me to gain intelligence on who in the company was ‘out to get him’
- ❖ Creatively used company expense account, however so did others, unable to use this a leverage.
- ❖ Wayne did not want to resign, but others in company and clients refused to work with him.
- ❖ What to do?



# Kate

- ❖ Victim of workplace psychopath in different organization
- ❖ Brutally psychologically victimized, she saw no escape.
- ❖ Eventually the only escape that she could see was to take her own life.
- ❖ Kate is not unique.



# Overview

- ❖ Mad, Bad or Evil? - The Psychopath?
- ❖ Different types of workplace psychopath
- ❖ The Organizational Psychopath
- ❖ The Corporate Criminal Psychopath



❖ The Violent Criminal Psychopath

❖ The Occupational Psychopath

❖ ‘Psychopaths’ – Good For Business?

❖ Victimology

❖ Managing the Workplace Psychopath



❖ Protecting Yourself.

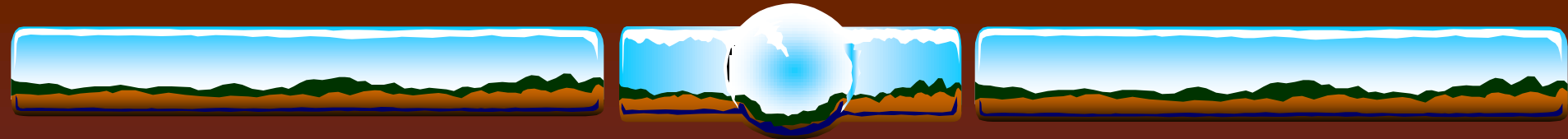
❖ Psychopathic Corporations.

❖ Confirmatory Bias – Alternative Diagnoses.



# Defining the Psychopath

- ❖ Psychopaths are individuals who lack a conscience; they live in their own complex world where societies' rules are broken at will.
- ❖ They are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations and empty wallets..doing what they want without the slightest sense of guilt or regret. (Hare, 1993: xi).
- ❖ The majority of psychopaths are not in prison, they are living and working in society; interacting with people on a daily basis.

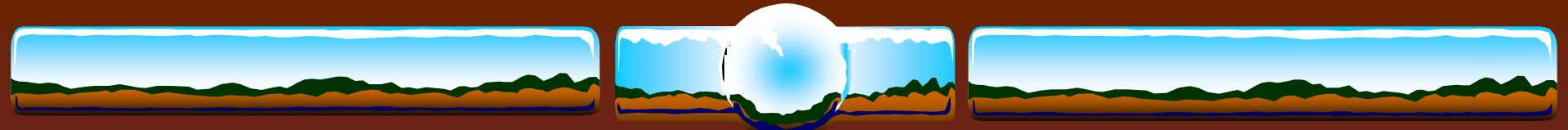


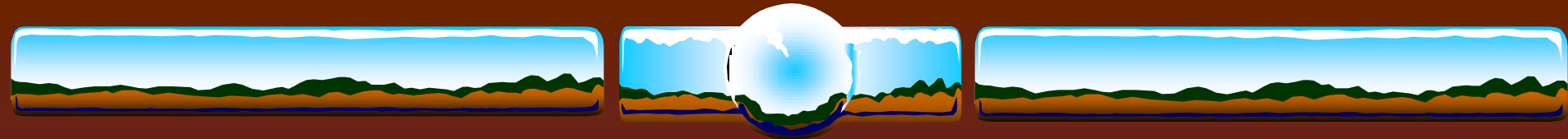
- ❖ Psychopaths display a distinct cluster of personality and behavioural characteristics.
- ❖ These characteristics are not overtly obvious when dealing with the psychopath in every day life.
- ❖ Different types of psychopath in society have different clusters of personality and behavioural characteristics.
- ❖ Commonalities across all psychopath types are lack of conscience, and inability to experience more than primary emotion.



# Prevalence

- ❖ Psychopathy can only be diagnosed in adults (>18 years) as personality by definition is not developed until this developmental stage.
- ❖ 1%-3% of adult males estimated to be psychopaths.
- ❖ 0.5%-1% of adult females estimated to be psychopaths.
- ❖ Robert Hare estimates there are 2 million male and female psychopaths in North America alone. (Hare, 1993).

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- ❖ It is difficult to estimate the real prevalence of psychopathy because the most common method of epidemiological research is self-report.
    - ❖ *Psychopaths are not likely to admit they are psychopaths in an epidemiological survey.*
  - ❖ Estimates of prevalence rates are conservative.
  - ❖ Sub-clinical psychopaths estimated at 10% of the management population



# Some Terminology

- ❖ **Psychopaths; Sociopaths, and Anti-social PD.**
  - ❖ Psychopath – Hare Psychopathy Checklist (Revised)
    - ❖ Combination of biological, psychological and social causal factors.
  - ❖ Sociopath – Similar to Psychopath but exclusive belief caused by social factors.
  - ❖ Anti-social PD – Only observable (i.e., behavioural) characteristics as PCL (Revised) ® relies somewhat on self-report by pathological liars. Reliability therefore questionable depending on rater.



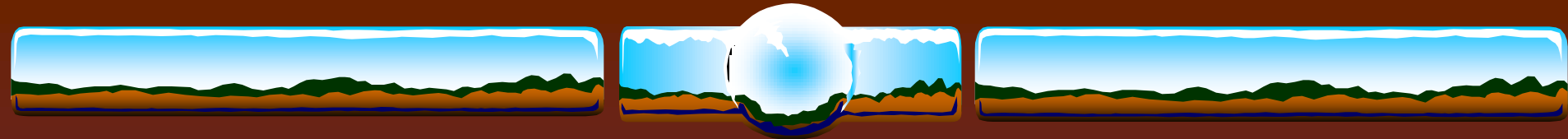
# Psychopathy Characteristics

- ❖ Glib /Superficial Charm
- ❖ Grandiose sense of self-worth
- ❖ Need for excitement
- ❖ Pathological lying
- ❖ Conning / Manipulative
- ❖ Lack remorse or guilt
- ❖ Shallow affect
- ❖ Callous / Lack of Empathy
- ❖ Parasitic lifestyle
- ❖ Poor behavioural control
- ❖ Promiscuous sexual behaviour
- ❖ Early behavioural problems
- ❖ Lack realistic, long term goals
- ❖ Impulsivity
- ❖ Irresponsibility
- ❖ Fail to accept responsibility for actions
- ❖ Many short term marital relationships
- ❖ Juvenile delinquency
- ❖ Revocation of parole

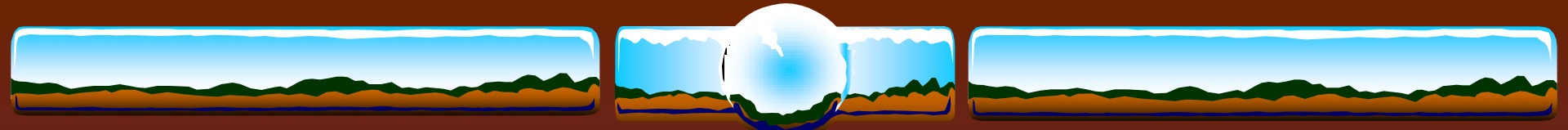


# Impaired Learned Fear Responses

- ❖ Psychopaths do not necessarily learn from / respond to
  - ❖ Social Punishment
  - ❖ Physical Punishment
- ❖ They do respond to
  - ❖ Deprivation of positive reinforcement



- ❖ Psychopaths only experience primary emotion
  - ❖ Happiness / Pleasure
  - ❖ Sadness
  - ❖ Anger / Fear (inverse of each other)
- ❖ This means that they do not empathise with other people. However, they “know the words but cannot hear the music to the song of life”. Thus they appear to ‘fit in’, no different from the people around them on a superficial level. They hide behind a ‘Mask of Sanity’.



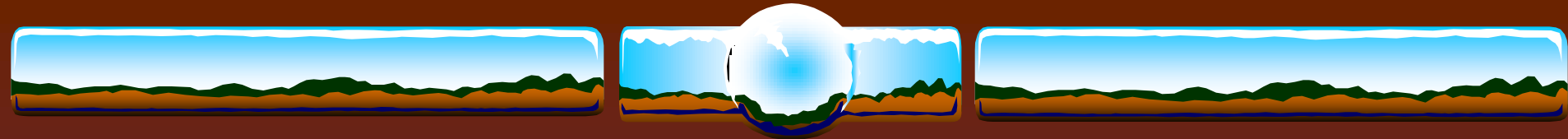
# Four Types of Workplace Psychopath

- ❖ Organisational Psychopath
- ❖ Corporate Criminal Psychopath
- ❖ Violent Criminal Psychopath
- ❖ Occupational Psychopath

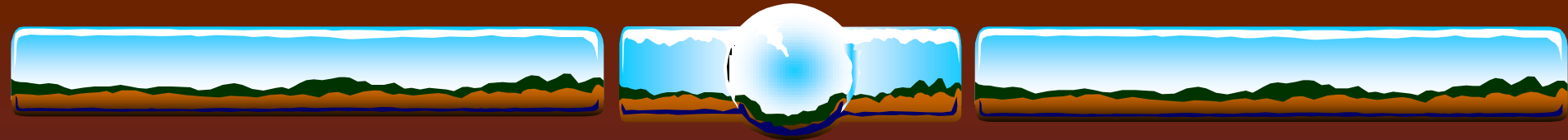


# Organisational Psychopaths

- ❖ The vast majority of research examining psychopaths has been done using convicted criminals as subjects.
- ❖ Organisational psychopaths have been the subject of very limited research attention; WWM first book published worldwide in the area. Now three books and some journal articles.
- ❖ First described by Babiak in the 1990s.



- ❖ If it was not possible for some reason to do research in prisons, the next place I would look is in politics, the stock market, business world etc.
- ❖ Why?
  - ❖ Because psychopath characteristics can be used very successfully in these environments. In fact, they are rewarded for manipulating, controlling and dominating the people around them.
- ❖ Recruit psychopaths in newspaper, positions vacant



- ❖ The organisational psychopath derives gratification from psychologically destroying people.
- ❖ For others, the objective is to move up the corporate ladder at any cost; the manipulation and suffering of co-workers is a bonus.



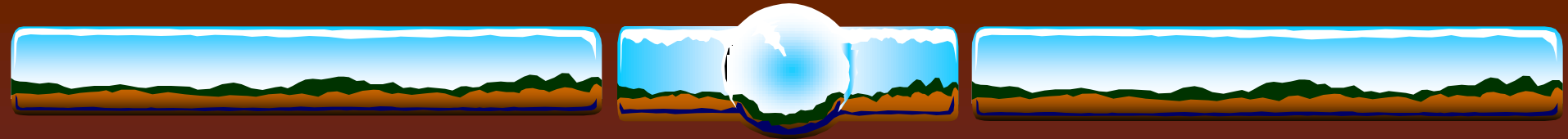
# Case Studies

## ❖ Andrew

- ❖ Australian head of multinational company
- ❖ Contacted me as result of media attention Work psychopaths
- ❖ Wanted to hear about others
- ❖ Moved to third world country as solution

## ❖ Lisa

- ❖ Junior accountant
- ❖ Do anything to become partner
- ❖ Stealing ideas, spread rumours, etc.
- ❖ Sophisticated covering of psychopathic behaviours
- ❖ Backed from high in organisation through impression management



# Organisational Psychopath Factors

- ❖ Organisational / Managerial Conduct
- ❖ Interpersonal Conduct
- ❖ Emotional / Individual Characteristics



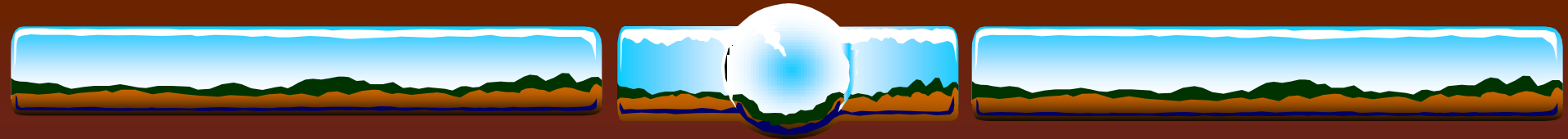
# Organisational / Managerial Conduct

- ❖ Manipulative (Organisational Level)
- ❖ Unethical
- ❖ Intolerant
- ❖ Unpredictable
- ❖ Easily Bored
- ❖ Parasitic
- ❖ Undependable
- ❖ Bullying (not necessarily confined to work)
- ❖ Seek increased power and control in company
- ❖ Create conflict between organization members



# Interpersonal Conduct

- ❖ Manipulative (interpersonal level)
- ❖ Deceitful / Devious
- ❖ No responsibility taken for own actions
- ❖ Intimidating
- ❖ Charming / Superficial



# Emotional / Individual Characteristics

- ❖ Unfeeling
- ❖ Conscienceless
- ❖ Grandiose / Self Important
- ❖ Egocentric / Narcissistic
- ❖ Shallow Affect
- ❖ Pathological Lying (duping delight)
- ❖ Marital problems
- ❖ Sexual promiscuity
- ❖ Impulsive



# Seek Increased Power and Control in Company

- ❖ Organisational Psychopaths derive much gratification from having power and control over people.
- ❖ The thrill of the chase is as pleasurable as the kill itself.



# Create Conflict Between Organization Members

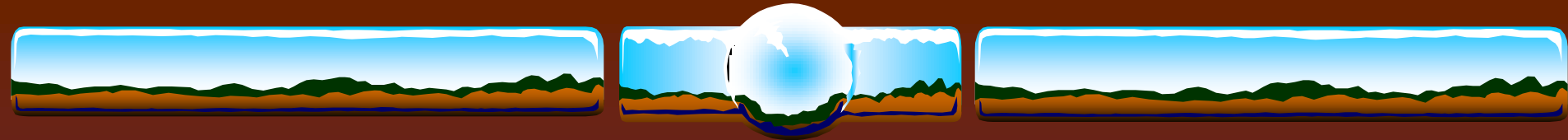
- ❖ “Divide and Conquer” – Adolf Hitler’s fuhrerprinzip or leadership principle.
- ❖ It can also divert attention away from their own failures.
- ❖ Solidifies their position as leader of a group in some cases.



# Tactics and Strategies

## ❖ 1. Organisational Entry

- ❖ “You will be innovative with something special to offer. No doubt you will have leadership and influencing skills, and be able to WOW a skeptical selection panel. We want someone who can see the biggest picture and have broad impact. Your background could be in.....whatever, you will be someone special” (Salary \$150K).
- ❖ “You will have a strong desire to achieve, the capacity to persuade and influence others, excellent communication skills...You want to work with the best. You enjoy competing as much as winning. You believe in high rewards for high levels of performance” (Salary \$85K).



- ❖ The organisational psychopath also prefers to enter corporations or environments that are undergoing change. The more rapid this change is, the better as the level of organisational confusion is increased.
- ❖ They are able to slip through the gaps, and are often seen as dynamic and creative rather than deceitful and prone to boredom / irresponsible etc.



# The Job Application and Interview

- ❖ They find it particularly easy to win positions in a diverse range of corporations.
- ❖ Corporations generally use recruitment agencies or hire employees directly. Both are inept when it comes to detecting the organisational psychopath.
- ❖ Resumes are falsified, what they have not done will be made up accordingly.



# The Interview Phase

- ❖ Charm and excellent verbal skills used to manipulate the interview process
- ❖ Research done from web-sites, physical surveillance, debriefing current employees.



## 2. Corporate Reconnaissance and Appraisal

- ❖ Co-workers evaluated once the organization has been successfully entered.
  - ❖ This is natural process. The difference between psychopath and normal is that the psychopath searches for weakness and vulnerability to exploit.
- ❖ People at different levels in the organization have very different impressions of the organizational psychopath.
- ❖ Impression Management



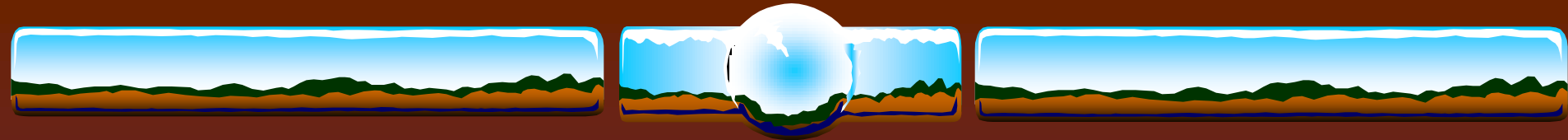
# Employees Categorised

- ❖ Frequent contact – high utility (Front desk security for building access)
- ❖ Frequent contact – low utility (co worker at opposite desk)
- ❖ Infrequent contact – high utility (Executive Director)
- ❖ Infrequent contact – low utility. (Garden maintenance)



# Vulnerability Assessment

- ❖ Three groups of vulnerable employees
  - ❖ 1. Followers, insecure and easily led in a ‘cause’.
  - ❖ 2. Psychologically vulnerable; low self esteem, weight issues, unattractive, low intelligence.
  - ❖ 3. Junior employees kept on side for entire psychopath employment period as useful in small ways. (e.g., secretary spread gossip).



## ❖ Usefulness is based on:

❖ Position power

❖ Technical ability

❖ Access to sensitive information

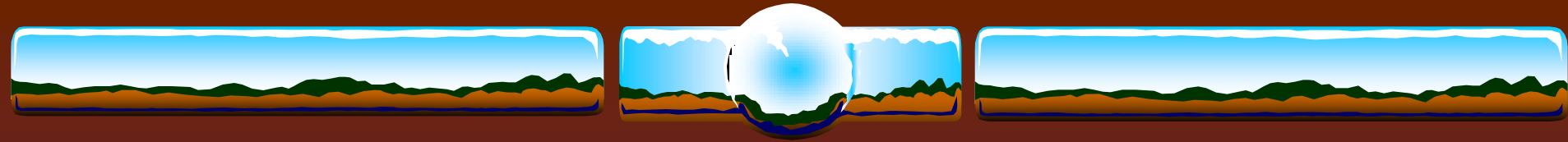
❖ Control of resources

❖ Ability to protect psychopath from organisational harm

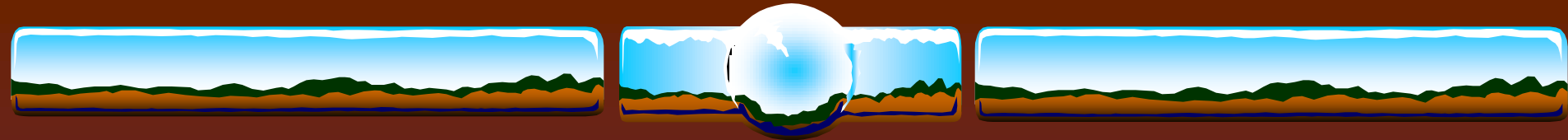


# The Process

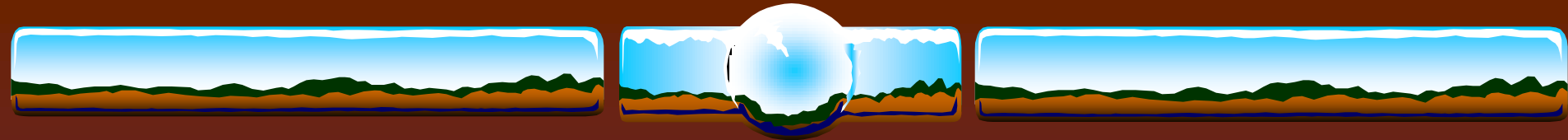
1. Create disharmony between co-workers and managers etc.
2. Endear self to upper management by resolving seemingly intractable situations created by the psychopath themselves.
3. Spread disinformation about rivals within the company. This is spread indirectly through third parties. (or plant drugs, stolen equipment etc on colleague).



4. Portray self in most favourable way.
5. Network with senior management, impression management based upon falsely created persona (e.g., tennis, golf, sailing, squash, stamp collecting)



6. Openly like manager, covertly destroy manager's reputation with their manager.
7. Promotion and supervision of former colleagues.
8. Administrative / psychological destruction of former co-workers for threat elimination.
  - ❖ public versus private sectors



9. VIP to note not all employees treated poorly, depends on utility discussed previously. Level of sophistication differs for individual org. psychopaths, hence different levels of success in companies.
10. Continue rise through company using personality and behavioural characteristics identified earlier
11. Results in either 'discovery and conflict' or an organizational psychopath with increasing power who becomes unstoppable. Why? They do not engage a consultant to look at themselves.



# Victim Manipulation Stages

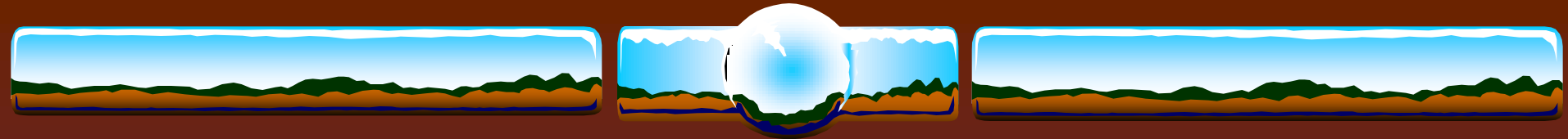
## ❖ 1. Introduction

- ❖ Victim meets psychopath and bombarded with so much stimulation there is little or no time to think. (Glib and superficial charm)
- ❖ Victim given psychological need (Nurture, feel attractive, wanted, loved, worthwhile etc).
- ❖ Victim ‘enjoys’ the psychopath because they feel good about self / life when with them.



## ❖ 2. Establish Rapport.

- ❖ Remain close to victim, isolating them from other people so they cannot check their thoughts with family / friends etc.
- ❖ Takes victim out to dinner, looking at ‘clients’, jobs etc, often on company expense account.
- ❖ Psychopath makes sure victim false perception of them is deeply ingrained.



## ❖ Identify Victim Needs

- ❖ Power
  - ❖ Money
  - ❖ Financial Stability
  - ❖ Don't have to work anymore
  - ❖ Security for children
  - ❖ Luxury car / country property
  - ❖ To feel loved, good parent etc.
- ❖ Lies tailored that promise to deliver victim need



## ❖ 4. Create Emotional Pain

- ❖ Point out to the victim that they are a failure because they have not achieved or do not have their emotional need previously identified.
- ❖ The psychopath can give them this need, if only they would trust the psychopath (usually with money).
- ❖ Emphasis placed on how the victim will feel if the emotional need is not satisfied.
- ❖ Makes it difficult for victim to admit they have been conned by the psychopath, as they focus on the dreams they want so badly.



## ❖ 5. Reverse Psychology

- ❖ Emphasis at this point by the psychopath at this point that the victim does not deserve to have their dreams realised because they do not have the courage or determination to trust the psychopath with their money.
- ❖ Often at this point the victim, who has already lost significant amounts of money, will inject more money into the scheme as they want to believe in the face validity of the situation.
- ❖ Self-confidence of victim often damaged beyond repair – no confidence in their ability to make future decisions.



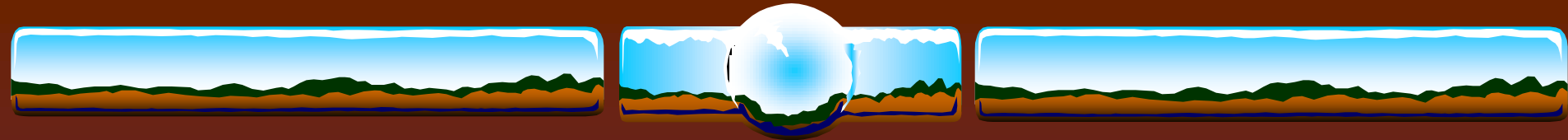
# Learned Helplessness

- ❖ Dogs
- ❖ People
  - ❖ Tasks allocated and self-esteem and victim perception of control destroyed
- ❖ Anxiety Disorders
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ This is how a person, any person, can be psychologically broken. Thus anyone can be a victim.



# Discovery and Conflict

- ❖ Pawns, Patrons and Patsies (Babiak, 1995)
  - ❖ Pawns – the everyday co-workers who are used and easily discarded when they have served their purpose
  - ❖ Patrons – People high up in the company who sponsor the psychopath, defending them as ‘high achievers’ or ‘talented employees’ in the face of criticism.
  - ❖ Patsies – What a patron becomes when they realise that the organisational psychopath has used them. By the time they are a patsy, they can do little or nothing but continue to watch the organisational psychopath’s meteoric rise through the company.



- ❖ Babiak states that the final thrill of the game for the organisational psychopath is to turn on the higher level / high power individuals (patrons) in the company who once protected them. They manipulate not only individuals, but the entire power structure in their favour.



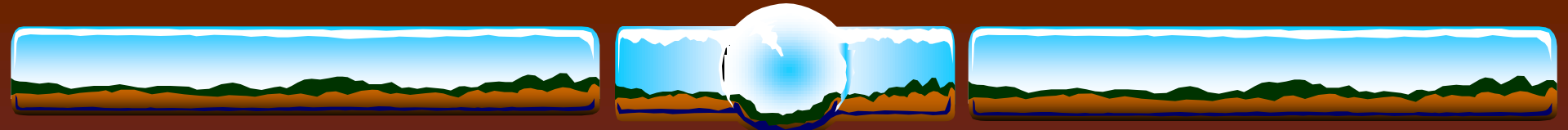
# Violent Criminal Psychopath

- ❖ Hannibal Lecter
- ❖ Serial Killers, rapists etc
- ❖ Similar psychologically, different strategies used to feel powerful



# Occupational Psychopath

- ❖ More likely to be found in public service, or positions with legislated power.
- ❖ Otherwise often psychologists (‘psychotherapy groups’) and cult type figures.
  - ❖ Policeman case study



# Workplace Psychopaths – Good For Business?

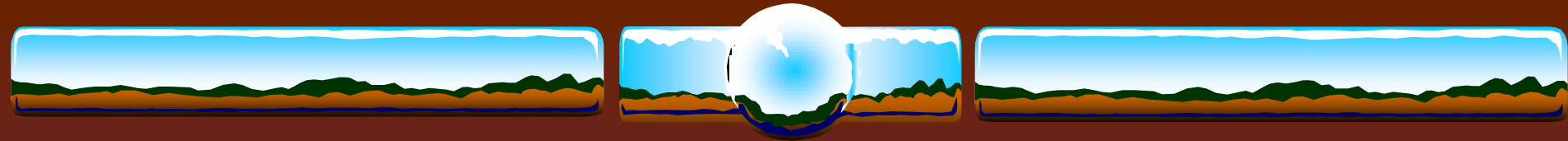
❖ No!!!

❖ What is good for business

❖ Profit for company

❖ Well being of workers

❖ Satisfied customers (Customer Relationship Management)

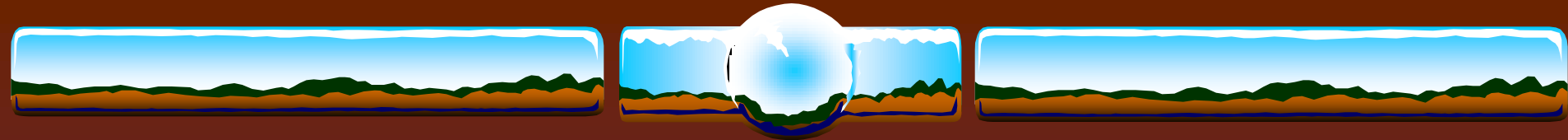


- ❖ In the short term they may generate sales etc, however long term they over promise and under deliver, causing loss of customers and staff retention problems.
- ❖ This effects the bottom line for any company negatively, and is therefore financially unsustainable.

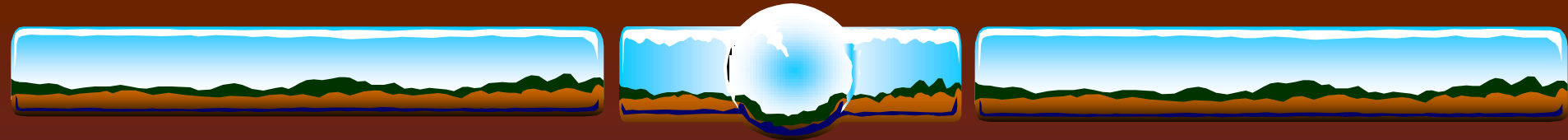


# Victimology

- ❖ Anxiety / Stress
- ❖ Inability to sleep
- ❖ Racing Heart
- ❖ Hyperventilation (fast, shallow breathing)
- ❖ Inability to concentrate
- ❖ Tension headaches / migraines
- ❖ Shame or embarrassment resulting in noticeable personality change



- ❖ Butterflies in stomach on way to, at or going home from work.
- ❖ Aching or tired muscles / joints
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Skin complaints (rashes, shingles after complaint started)
- ❖ Abuse or overuse if substances used to self-medicate (alcohol, tobacco, prescription and illegal drugs).
- ❖ Hair loss
- ❖ Blood pressure
- ❖ Stomach ulcers
- ❖ Suicidal thoughts



- ❖ Chronic fatigue syndrome
- ❖ Glandular fever
- ❖ Significant weight loss or gain
- ❖ A feeling of exhaustion
- ❖ Irritable or on edge all the time
- ❖ Difficulty trusting or believing anybody
- ❖ Relationship problems (increase fighting etc)
- ❖ Loss of interest in sexual activity



# Victim Stages

- ❖ Disbelief and shock
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Feel like they are going crazy
- ❖ Confused
- ❖ Guilty
- ❖ Ashamed and Embarrassed
- ❖ Isolated
- ❖ Learned Helplessness
- ❖ Anxiety disorders, depression, other mental illness



# Victim Experiences

- ❖ Often victims say that they feel they:
  - ❖ Are Going crazy
  - ❖ Will not be believed by anyone
  - ❖ Guilty and confused about the situation
  - ❖ Life is unfair
  - ❖ Helpless in the situation.
- ❖ The reality is that for many people they are helpless, there is nothing they can do. They need to evaluate the costs and benefits of staying and fighting versus leaving.



# Managing the Workplace Psychopath

- ❖ Managing and curing the workplace psychopath are two very different issues.
  - ❖ There is no ‘cure’ for psychopathy
  - ❖ Rehabilitation makes them worse
  - ❖ Managing the workplace psychopath will depend on the variables unique to each psychopath.
- ❖ The only type of workplace psychopath that can be managed on average is the organisational psychopath subtype.



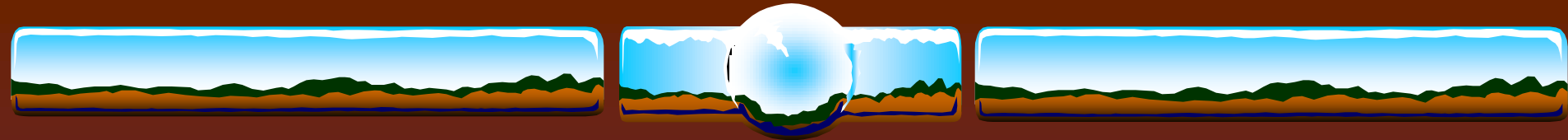
# Management Plan

- ❖ Organisational Assessment
- ❖ Managing the Specific Psychopath
  - ❖ Learning and reinforcement schedules
  - ❖ Law of Effect
    - ❖ Wayne case study – how the situation was resolved.



# Day to Day Management Strategies

- ❖ Frequent monitoring of performance
- ❖ Reward contingent on behavior
  - ❖ Token economy system
    - ❖ Mental institutions
    - ❖ Workplace
- ❖ Get everything in writing and make sure supported by organization and team members, otherwise you will be neutralized by the psychopath.



# Protecting Employees and Colleagues

- ❖ Employee Education
- ❖ Team building exercises – building a protective shell
- ❖ Employee life-coaching and self-esteem maintenance
- ❖ Stress Management



# Profiling the Workplace Psychopath

- ❖ Recruitment strategies at present do not address psychopathy at all.
- ❖ It is relatively straightforward to identify the workplace psychopath, and certainly cost-effective to prevent them from entering a corporation.
  - ❖ Psychometric tests are beatable
  - ❖ Resumes are falsifiable
  - ❖ Interviews are the easiest of all



# Screening Instrument

- ❖ Questionnaire available that can be used to cost-effectively screen for indications of workplace psychopathy.



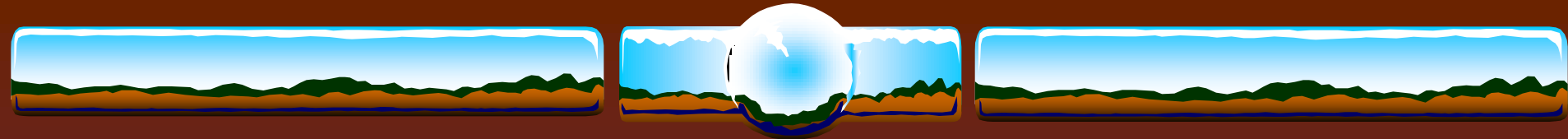
# Who Can Help

- ❖ Forensic Psychologist / Psychiatrist– make sure they have expertise in area of psychopathy and workplace psychopaths in particular. They work in conjunction with HR staff.
- ❖ Management Consultant – useful for establishing broad systems but knows little about psychopath.
- ❖ Ex-law enforcement – most commonly used to combat psychopathic behaviour, yet limited knowledge of psychopaths. Their expertise is best used to document and prove or disprove allegations made about specific employees.
- ❖ Forensic Accountant – audit books etc.



# Internal Auditor Versus Psychopaths

- ❖ Natural enemies
- ❖ Impression Management
- ❖ Numbers versus words
- ❖ Friendship
  - ❖ Trust
  - ❖ Face validity
  - ❖ Optimism bias
  - ❖ Loyalty
  - ❖ Feel special, loved, alive etc

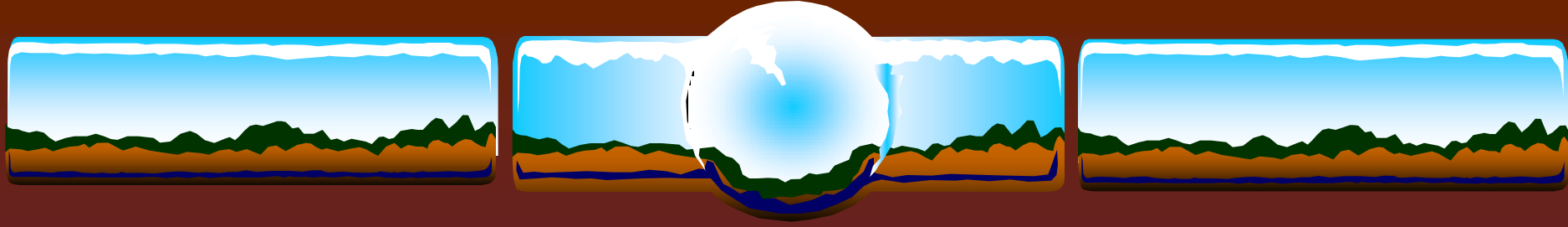


- ❖ Loyalty to Whom
- ❖ Fear of disclosure
- ❖ The workplace psychopath will try and have the Internal Auditor emotionally invested in the psychopaths success.
- ❖ If the psychopath is promoted to a senior position (above the auditor) they will do everything they can to remove the auditor who did not support them.
- ❖ The auditor realises at this point the true nature of the organisational psychopath



# Mistaken Identity

- ❖ Confirmatory Bias
- ❖ Availability Heuristic
- ❖ Over controlling (insecure manager)
- ❖ Poor interpersonal skills
- ❖ Narcissistic PD
- ❖ Type A, B, C and D Personalities
- ❖ Schizophrenia
- ❖ Pathological Gambling
- ❖ Drug Addiction



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