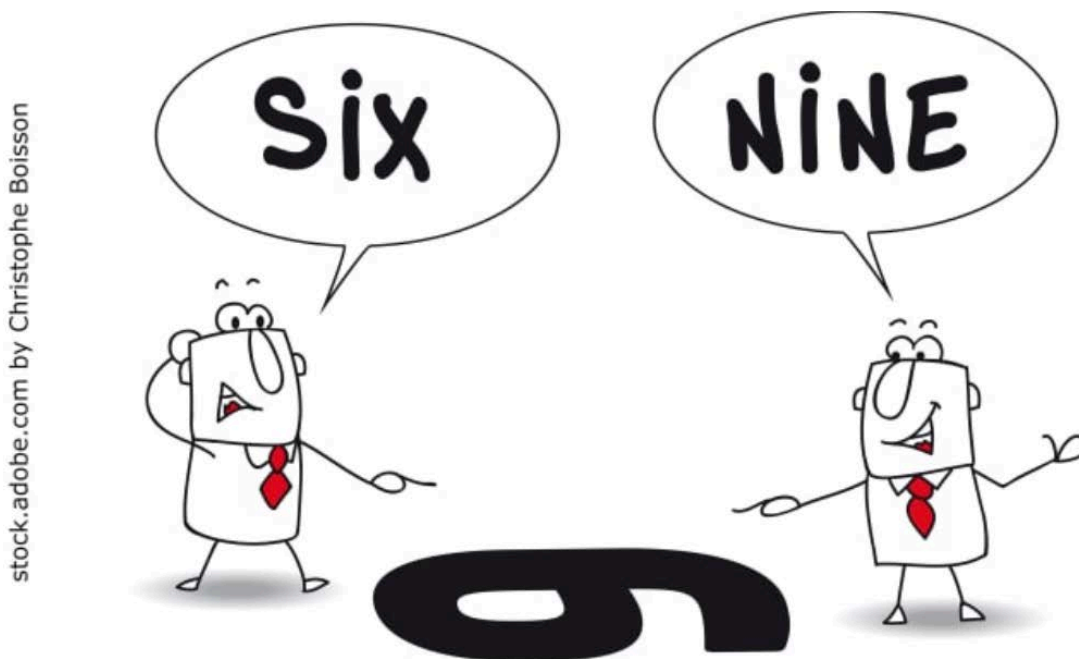


## When Being Right is not Always Effective: How dichotomous thinking can be problematic

Dichotomous thinking: also known as black-and-white thinking or all-or-nothing thinking, involves seeing situations in extreme, polarized terms. It usually involves two categories such as good or bad, right or wrong, best or worst, this or that. Dichotomous thinking is problematic for these reasons:

- Tends to create conflict
- Difficulty seeing another person perspective
- Win-lose relationships
- This is associated with rigid thinking
- This is associated with extreme language such as always, never, etc
- Makes people feel stuck or trapped



### But being right in relationships is not always effective

- Do you argue about being right at the expense of the relationship's well-being?
- Do you think more about getting your objective met and forget about showing the other person respect?
- Some examples may include:
  - Your child has not done their homework and you focus solely on the task of getting the homework done and maybe you miss their feelings of isolation that they are feeling among their peers or their feelings of not being smart enough
  - You asked your partner to help get the homework done and instead they spent the time with the kids watching a movie.

**Dialectic thinking is the alternative to Dichotomous thinking**

- Dialectics is the idea that two opposing things can be true at once
- Reduces black and white thinking
- Helps people have more flexible thinking
- Helps us “unstick” standoffs and conflicts
- Teaches us how to understand another person’s perspective
- Teaches us that there are always more than one way to see a situation
- A few examples of dialectic thinking:
  - My child is doing the best they can AND they can do better.
  - I can do this AND it’s going to be hard
  - I am upset at my partner’s choices AND I can respect his right to parent according to his own beliefs