

Discipline #10 –Creative Conflict Resolution Meeting

[This is the only one of the ten disciplines that is done with the other party. As such it requires both parties be committed to working together to resolve the conflict. If at any point it becomes clear this is not the case, go back to Discipline #9.]

Injunction [What to do]:

[Each of these steps must be taken but they are not always taken in this order. You may find yourself skipping over steps because they are already resolved but if you find the process getting bogged down, you will do well to address them in order.]

1. **Clarify the nature of the relationship:** The resolution happens in the context of the relationship as it is defined by the parties. If there is not a clear understanding of the nature of the relationship, or if there are differing perceptions of the nature of the relationship, then the conflicts that arise within it are not resolvable. Indeed, the differing perceptions of the nature of the relationship are a conflict in and of themselves.
2. **Clarify What Actually Happened:** The conflict to be resolved stems from the shared reality within the relationship. When there is no shared reality or the parties are not dealing with the reality they both experience, the conflict is not resolvable.
3. **Discover How the Shared Experience Affects Each Other:** Even when there is agreement on what happened or what happens, the way the event affects the parties is different. That is intrinsic to there being a conflict. There are five sub-skills to this task.
 - a. Each party must have the capacity to know how it is being affected and
 - b. be able clearly describe the effect in such a way that the other parties can know that experience.
 - c. It must be “safe” to let the others know what is going on with each party.
 - d. The parties must be able to tolerate hearing that the others are different and to see the difference as valid.
 - e. Each party must be able to reflect back what the other is saying so that the speaking party knows it is being heard.
4. **Identify Shared Goals:** Though there are real differences, there are also shared goals. Without shared goals, there is no basis for a relationship. Identifying those shared goals creates the glue that holds the relationship together.
5. **Commit to Individual Action:** Each party has a role in furthering the shared goals. Each will identify a specific course of action that will promote the shared

goal. If each party commits to an action and follows through, the common goal is created as well as trust in the relationship.

Why do it [Rationale]:

The truth is we all do this discipline all the time. We just don't usually break it down into its constituent steps. The reason for listing it is that this one is very hard to do when we are under a lot of stress, and so it really helps if we can identify each of the steps and recognize that we already know how to do this.

We do this because we come across situations in our significant relationships in which we are looking at the same event from very different perspectives and we become afraid that we are going to get stuck. We are going to have bad feelings and we aren't going to become able to act together to create what we both need.

What it will get you [Promises]:

Done well this will get you a clear sense of what is happening, an understanding of how the other understands what is happening and what it means to them, the knowledge that they care to know what your experience is and are able to see how it is valid for you, a clear sense of what you both value and what qualities you are both committed to creating in your relationship, and an agreement about what you will both do.

Suggestions:

The agreement that this process can create for you is not one that will be easy to maintain. Don't assume that it will be durable. You will likely have to continue to reconstruct it. Notice if this is a problem for you. Sometimes we take such pride in having created the agreement that we feel resentment when it is damaged or broken.

Instead I encourage you to focus on the process of creating the agreement rather than on the agreement itself. See the process as the goal. When the agreement is damaged you then have another opportunity to engage in the process. The more you engage in the process the more clearly you are each able to see the qualities you are trying to create together and the more you have a sense of partnership in creating the relationship.

Remember that at the Interpersonal tier we are not trying to make the conflict go away. We are trying to construct relationships in which we can clearly see and honor the validity of each other's perspective.

If you and your partner create an agreement and it is not kept, then either or both of you are not of one mind about the agreement. This is an opportunity to discover how you are each at odds with yourself over how you each want to be. This is a creative opportunity.

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