

COOPERATIVE DECISIONS/RESOLUTIONS (CONSENSUS) REQUIRE THAT DECISION MAKERS ADOPT CONSTRUCTIVE (CONSENSUS) VALUES.

Last month I defined a Cooperative Decision/Resolution. This month I will focus on the values which make a Cooperative Decision/Resolution possible. And next month I will suggest that there are three basic ways we handle conflicts and make decisions.

Below is a model which illustrates that whether we think the issue is really important or the issue is not at all important, we will be working on that issue (perhaps a conflict) with other people. We always give a message and get a message from others regarding our commitment to be constructive. Person A in Figure 1 is low on commitment to be constructive in the relationship and thinks the issue is very important. Person B is committed to be constructive and thinks the issue is not very important. For Person C the issue is very important and their commitment to be constructive is very high.

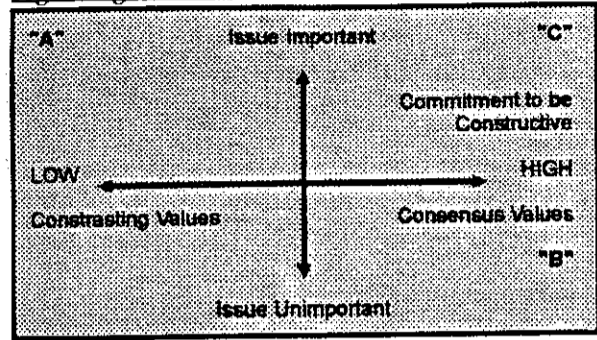


figure 1

Figure 1 reminds us that whether we think the issue is important or unimportant we will give, and receive, a message about our commitment to be constructive in the relationship. The likelihood of finding a cooperative resolution increases as the decision-makers move to the right side of the "commitment to be constructive" continuum. Ury and Fisher describe this need to be constructive in Getting Together. In Biblical language we call the horizontal line in Figure 1 the Love (Agape) continuum. To the right side is Love (Agape) and to the left side is Not Love (Not Agape). Agape is one of the Greek words which gets translated into the English word "Love." It carries a very similar meaning to the idea of being constructive with the added understanding that it is not dependent on the response of the other(s). This is why it makes very practical sense when Jesus says we should "Love our Enemies." I John 4

heightens the importance of moving to the Love side by saying "those who Love (agape) know God and those who do not Love (agape) do not know God."

Being constructive means acting in ways that implement cooperative decision/resolution (consensus) values. I Cor. 13: 4-7 provides a definition. Note the listing of cooperative decision/resolution (consensus) values and contrasting values. Some of these are taken directly from I Cor 13. Please evaluate them critically. Ask yourself "if I'm working with someone or some group on a conflict or making a decision, would I prefer the other(s) be closer to the agape or not agape side?" Then let that influence how you act.

A cooperative decision/resolution (consensus) is as dependent on the implementation of constructive values as on following a particular process. When a group is stuck, one option is to stop and give everyone time to examine the list of values and recommit themselves to constructive values. Our VORP story illustrates this point.

Our story this month is from Patti Silva, a participant in the Friends Meeting, and a volunteer VORP mediator. You will note in her story that Patti's skillful intervention, asking them to reconsider their commitment to be constructive, was the turning point in their meeting. Please note also that she built in a follow-up meeting. Accountability is essential in any good agreement.

As I turned from the Smiths' doorstep, asking myself why I get involved in these things, the strapping, smiling fifteen year old boy suddenly appeared saying, "Hope I'm not late." School is six miles away from the rural home in the vineyards. Per prior agreement with his mother, we drove to the nearby library conference room. This was a different sort of VORP case. The "victim" was the mother and the "offender" was her son.

First I met with Vanessa, Donny's mom, so she could decide if she was comfortable with the idea of Donny talking to me, since she was both victim and mother of the offender. Her story was detailed and included intense feelings: "Donny has refused to obey me. Stepfather and Donny are not getting along. Stepfather is not taking part in counseling, which Donny and I started a few weeks ago, and I don't expect him to take part in this (VORP mediation). A few weeks ago, after Donny had defied us again, even though we had warned him he'd be grounded-- for two weeks. We came home, and no sooner did we walk in the door, and he announced to me that he was going cruising with his friends. When I reminded him that we had just decided less than an hour ago that he was going to be grounded, 'he lost it.' He pounded his fists through the door and a wall. Then I 'lost it' and he just got more violent, so I called the Sheriff. I was at my wit's end." The mother of four boys, who is attending school to learn accounting in hopes of "providing a better life for my boys" stated that she felt simultaneously relieve and guilty when the Sheriff took Donny to Juvenile Hall. "He's always been a good kid, I cannot understanding what's happening here." (Continued on back)

Contrasting Values	Cooperative Decision/Resolution Values
be impatient and give up quickly	be patient and willing to persevere
unkind	kind
jealous	accepting
conceited	modest
rude	courteous
insist on my own way	look for our way
anger destroys people	anger destroys barriers
pessimistic	provides hope
if they misunderstand me I refuse to try to understand them	if they misunderstand me I try to understand them
emotion used to get my way	emotion brings attention to problem and its intensity
discourage disagreement	encourage disagreement
making agreements is a way to get them "off your back" then do what you want	agreements that are made are kept or re-negotiated
only my concerns/interests are important	everyone's concerns/interests are important
OK to manipulate, hide or disguise information to get my way	want everyone to make free and voluntary decision based on full understanding
push for what I want wait for them to raise objections	take initiative to check it out with those who will be impacted most
a good process and a good decision are the sole responsibility of the moderator	each person assumes some responsibility for good process and a good decision
stick to my position	continually reexamine my position in the light of new insights or new understanding
eliminate the opponent	unconditional commitment to be constructive

Donny's story was similar but included feelings about his life both at home and at school. One major problem is no telephone at home so "I can't call when I am delayed." He added, "I just can't understand what's happening here."

Donny agreed to the mediation and to a constructive intent. (It was now clear to me why I get involved.) We read the groundrules together in preparation for the joint meeting.

Though we went over and agreed to the purpose of the meeting and the groundrules, Donny's mother kept interrupting as Donny tried to tell his version of the story. I stopped us there, reminded them of their intentions, and asked if they felt that they would prefer another evening for doing this. She instantly said no, she'd like to continue-- Donny also wanted to continue. Now remembering their commitments to be constructive, as Donny proceeding with his story, Vanessa's tensed expression changed to one of rapt attention. She was hearing things she had not heard be-

fore. And after both had spoken, summarized, and discussed issues, impacts, and feeling, Donny's mother added, "The reason I called the Sheriff was because you muttered something about wishing you were dead, and that really scared me; I didn't know what to do." Donny was touched, and then they were hugging and Donny saying he was sorry for what he'd done.

Their agreement for "making things right" between them included a clearly defined set of yard chores and a follow-up meeting. They decided to discuss Donny's death statement with the counselor. They talked about another less violent school for next year. Donny promised "no more out of control behavior." These things were written and the agreement was signed.

Thanks Patti!! Blessed are the peacemakers!
(Follow-up meeting results. The agreement was completed. Relations are improving. School grades are improving.)

More mediators are needed

You can improve your peacemaking skills and serve our community by attending a VORP Mediator training. The next training is scheduled for April 12, 19, & 26. Each session is from 6:30 to 9:30. A second VORP mediator training is scheduled for April 23(6:30 - 9:30) & 24(8:30 - 3:30). For those who intend to work with VORP cases the only fee is the \$15 materials fee. For others the fee is \$75. All are welcome. Two Spanish Language VORP Mediator training events are scheduled, April 30 & May 1 and May 3, 10 & 17. Call Barbara or Linda at 291-1120 for details.

VORP relies entirely on your contributions!!!

More than 100 cases were assigned in January and February. 39 new volunteer mediators were trained. Our commitment is to grow to meet the need (perhaps as many as 400 cases per month) as volunteers and resources to support them grow. Volunteers are slightly ahead of the resources to support them at this point. As mentioned last month, VORP needs at 20 new contributors at \$20 per month to match our recent increases in both volunteers needing training and case management/liaison. VORP will continue to grow and be accountable to you for use of your funds as you decide to help make a constructive difference in our community.

Shalom

Ron Claassen, Director



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Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

The Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) is a community-based program that provides a safe and structured environment for victims and offenders to meet and discuss the impact of the crime. The program is designed to help victims understand the offender's perspective, express their feelings, and seek closure. Offenders are given the opportunity to explain their actions, take responsibility, and express remorse. The program is facilitated by trained mediators and is available to victims and offenders who are willing to participate. The program is a voluntary process and is not a court requirement. The program is held in a neutral, safe location and is open to all who are interested in participating. The program is a valuable resource for victims and offenders alike and is an important part of the community's effort to address crime and promote healing.