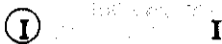


## A MODEL FOR REDUCING STRESS AND INCREASING EFFICIENCY

In the last two newsletters I defined a Cooperative Decision/Resolution and the values which make a Cooperative Decision/Resolution possible. But, as we know, not everyone is willing to work at a cooperative resolution. This month we will look at three ways we generally handle conflicts and decisions in our systems (family, school, church, criminal justice system, etc).

We'll start with definitions. To help illustrate the three ways conflicts/decisions are handled I have developed the illustration below. The I's indicate the persons involved in the conflict. The x's indicate an outside person or other resource. The parts that are circled indicate who makes the decision or controls the outcome of the conflict.

### COERCIVE POWER



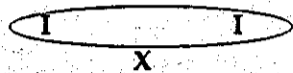
This is where one side has the ability to cause the other to go along even though they would prefer not to go along. In situations of safety (like when a child runs in front of a car and an adult pulls the child to safety) this method is very effective. In many situations this method provides only short term solutions and produces an ongoing power struggle.

### OUTSIDE AUTHORITY



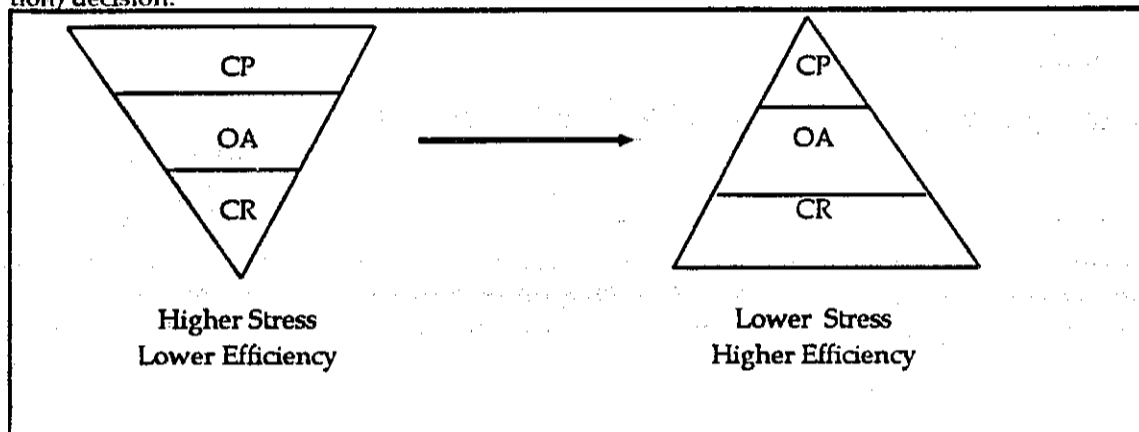
This is where a person, or rule, or other resource outside of those in conflict (or making a decision) makes a decision for the parties. This works well when the authority is accepted (like looking up the spelling of a word in a dictionary) but fails when the authority is not accepted by both sides.

### COOPERATIVE RESOLUTION



This is where the parties come to a mutual agreement/decision. Sometimes they do this themselves (negotiation) but sometimes they need the assistance of an outside person (mediation). The outside person leads a process which assists the parties in making their own decision. This method only works when both parties enter this process voluntarily and with cooperative intentions. One major role of the outside party is in helping each party decide if they want to be cooperative. An advantage of this type of decision/resolution is that it generally lasts longer and needs no enforcement because both parties have agreed that this is a good decision/resolution.

A system (family, school, business, church, criminal justice system, etc) generally uses all three ways of handling their conflicts and making their decisions. Research is concluding that the amount of use of the three methods has an impact on costs, both financial and emotional (*Getting Disputes Resolved* by Ury, Brett and Goldberg). From studies in the coal mining industry they developed the model below. The left triangle illustrates a system where coercive power is used most and cooperative resolutions used least. In the system on the right all decision/conflicts start at the cooperative resolution level and only go to outside authority or coercive power when one party is not cooperative or where the parties try but can't come to a resolution/decision.



There are three reasons why cooperative resolution/decisions methods are not used more:

1. Because the parties lack the skill, format, and structure.
2. Because no one invites, encourages or helps them.
3. Because the lens we look through says that when one violates a rule or makes a mistake there must be punishment, rather than "making things right."

VORP is a cooperative resolution structure. Out of 184 cases (Jan 1 to April 11, 1993), only 17% of the victims and 12% of the offenders have been unwilling to participate in a cooperative resolution method (VORP) when invited. Cooperative resolutions work more frequently when people are invited and a structure and skilled leadership are provided.

## 14 Year Old Sheds Tears Of Regret - Takes Responsibility for Crime

Our story this month is written by Jaun Jose Romero. Jaun and his wife, Maite Gayo, and children Michael, Sarah, and Lydia are from Brussels, Belgium. They are studying mediation and conflict resolution in the USA for one year in preparation for initiating mediation program (possibly including VORP) as part of the Mennonite Center in Brussels. In addition to nine months of study at Fresno Pacific College Center for Conflict Studies and Peacemaking, they will be attending several mediation seminars as they travel East and prepare to return home. As part of their study they have, together with Jonathan Villabolos, translated the VORP materials into Spanish in preparation for leading our first Spanish Language mediator training, April 30-May 1. Some names and details have been changed in the story to protect identities.

After my VORP mediator training, end of September, these were two elements of my first case as a volunteer mediator with VORP.

"You know... I was with two others guys and my girlfriend in Selma.

Suddenly we decided to go somewhere in Fresno and one of the guys suggested that we "take" a car to go there and ..."

"At 2:00am police woke me up suddenly and asked me if I knew where my car was? I indicated to them with my finger somewhere in the darkness but I couldn't find it. In reality the car had been stolen and police found it in Fresno. I was living in Selma and when I found it, several things were broken. I lost two half-days of work for filling out papers and doing repairs. I paid about \$900 for this 'joke'."

When first I met Ken (the offender, 14 years old) and his new foster parents I knew I was welcome to his house. After my explanation about the VORP program, they agreed to meet with the victim and to try to make things as right as possible.

English is not my first language and sometimes I think it is helpful to others when they have some one like me who tries to help them and doesn't speak English so fluently. (Over)

*(Story continued from front)*

When I met with Jorge (20) and his pregnant wife, who were the victims I realized that VORP would be a good opportunity for the two parties to talk together.

Both agreed to do their best to talk about the offense and to try to find an arrangement for restitution and to talk about the future.

I still remember my first joint-meeting with them (It is difficult to forget; maybe like a first love) and especially how Ken -the offender- had to take responsibility and how he tried to think of ways to make restitution. He had tears in his eyes and regret in his heart for the offense he had done.

I also will never forget how Jorge tried to explain to Ken how he had also been involved with some "bad" friends some years ago, like him. Jorge, the Mexican who is just learning to speak English, invited Ken, the Anglo and native English-speaking teenager, to come if he ever needed help in the future to his house ...

The end of the joint-meeting was a good start for restitution. To help me facilitate the joint meeting I asked another volunteer mediator to help in the translation. My helper proposed that Ken could work at his church. Today Ken is still working several hours a month to pay back his part of restitution for Jorge's expenses.

Thanks Jaun!!!

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## VORP relies entirely on your contributions!!!

184 cases were assigned through April 11. 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 ahead of the resources to support them at this point. It would be a shame to have to cut back on cases when volunteers are trained and ready. VORP needs at least 20 new contributors at \$20 per month to match our recent increases in volunteer mediators available and resulting increased cases and need for case management/liaison. VORP will continue to grow as volunteer mediators and funds to train and support them are available. Please make this a matter of prayer. Our community needs to see more examples of how responsibility, forgiveness and reconciliation (God's preferred method of dealing with conflict) reduce the costs (emotional and financial) of conflict.

Shalom

Ron Claassen, Director

CORRECTION from April Newsletter: Getting Together, Fisher and Brown, not Ury and Fisher

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## Victim Offender Reconciliation Program