

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER
NEWSLETTER WINTER 2018 NUMBER 5

COOPERATION AND COMPROMISE

**William M. Timpson and Bob Meroney
Fort Collins Rotary Club
and
Lindsey Pointer, 2017 Rotary Global Grant Recipient**

In this fifth newsletter of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to continue our invitation for contributors and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to promote the foundational skills for promoting peace, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation as well as the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties.

These are the same skills and ideas we are nurturing with our Rotary Global Grant in Burundi, East Africa at the University of Ngozi. By sharing more of this project in what follows, we hope to spark new thinking about what can be done locally, on college campuses, elementary and secondary schools, in churches, other organizations as well as in communities of all sized, formally and informally—wherever people are looking for new and constructive ways through conflicts.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND COOPERATION

Lindsey Pointer

NOTE: Lindsey Pointer has been working on the use of restorative principles in the criminal justice system. She defines herself as a restorative practices facilitator, trainer and researcher and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Restorative Justice at Victoria University in New Zealand with support from a Rotary Global Grant Scholarship and the Fulbright Program from the U.S. State Department.

During the recent government shut down, a bipartisan group of roughly two-dozen senators helped craft the funding deal to re-open the government. The group used a “talking stick” as a tool to facilitate their meeting, only allowing the senator with the stick to speak in an effort to cut down on interruptions.

The use of the “talking stick” originated in Indigenous North American customs and is today also commonly used in restorative practices such as the circle, a process used to build connections and resolve disputes in community. Sometimes the “talking *stick*” is replaced by another sort of “talking *piece*,” an object that has special significance to the group or facilitator using it. For example, I have heard a story of a group of construction workers having a difficult conversation about workplace safety using the hard hat of a deceased workmate as a talking piece to pass around in the circle.

Regardless of the specific object used, the talking piece fulfills the important function of ensuring the equal voice and respectful communication necessary for cooperation to occur.

The story about the use of the talking stick by the group of senators got me thinking about other restorative principles and practices used by groups to increase cooperation. The restorative justice organizations I have worked with have all sought to be restorative organizations, operating internally in accordance with the same principles and values that they shared with the wider community. I have learned a few key strategies from working with these restorative organization that all help to foster an environment conducive to cooperation.

Lesson one

Always make time for relationships.

The work always gets done and is done well, but plenty of time is made to laugh together, to check in about our lives, and offer support. Every meeting with our (?) whole staff begins with a connection circle in which each staff member answers a relationship-building question. Our staff takes turns facilitating those circles and picking the question and talking piece.

Above all else, restorative practices prioritize the building and maintaining of healthy relationships for us. We all have a want and a need to feel belonging and the only way to accomplish that is through opportunities for genuine connection. Furthermore, positive interpersonal relationships are a major influence on behavior. Research has shown that when we feel connected, heard, and appreciated at work, productivity increases. Having positive relationships with the people you work with also makes it easier to collaborate and compromise.

Lesson two

Establish a productive way to deal with conflict and remain open to feedback.

Within the toolbox of restorative practices is a conversation model called the restorative conversation. This is a way of addressing one-on-one conflict that focuses on the impacts and what can be done to make things right and moving forward. As an organization, Longmont Community Justice Partnership trains volunteers in this method so that they have a restorative way to resolves disputes among themselves over unreturned phone calls or differences in facilitation styles. The restorative conversation is also encouraged as a way for staff to deal with conflict and all members of the staff are training in the model. Because staff members have a tool for dealing with conflict, it doesn't fester or come up again later passively aggressively inhibiting cooperation. Instead, staff members are able to hear each other and form and commit to a plan to make things better.

Lesson three

Listen and show you are listening.

Active listening is a pillar of restorative practices. Facilitators are taught to show that they are listening in the moment through eye contact, body language, questions, and reflective statements. Showing someone that you are really listening goes a long way in cooperation.

Bringing the values, the principles, and the tools of restorative practices into our daily lives, families, and work communities allows us to facilitate a social environment that is conducive to cooperation. Like the simple but powerful talking stick, these simple but powerful restorative practices foster healthy community interactions.

WHERE DOES COMPROMISE FIT WITHIN COOPERATION?

There can be no real Cooperation without Compromise.

Prepared by Robert N. Meroney

NOTE: Bob Meroney is an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He has been an active member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club and regularly researches a range of topics on modern life, issues and politics that serve to spark deeper conversations among friends and colleagues.



Conflict and discord often occur because individuals and groups disagree about the resolution of different social, economic, or political goals. Resolution of conflict as we have discussed in earlier newsletters is *ideally* expected to occur when through effective communication joint understanding of different points of view appear, common goals are identified, a consensus among the parties is created, trust is established, cooperation arises, solutions are shared, and everyone is satisfied. Hence, as promised by Robert

Browning in his poem *Pippa Passes* “*All’s right with the world*”, or as the French satirist Voltaire wrote in 1759 in his novella *Candide: or, The Optimist*, all will work out in the end because “*It is the best of all possible worlds!*”

Sadly, and cynically, neither the conflict resolution process nor the end result is always so ordered and optimistic. An important component of reaching a state of cooperation among differing parties is “*compromise.*” Synonyms for compromise are *accommodation, concession, give and take, negotiation, deal, concurrence, and bargain* (cruder alternatives are *haggle and horse trade.*)

Why is the process of compromise so difficult? One would think that sharing responsibility, meeting each other halfway, and finding a happy medium would always be a common goal. The difficulty is the other viewpoint about the compromise process. Some people with strong convictions would argue that compromise is morally and ethically wrong, because:

- The act requires accepting standards that are lower than desirable,
- The process is unseemly, unprincipled and dishonest,

- Any compromise involves not merely getting less than you want, but also, thanks to your opponents, getting less than you think you deserve,
- It is a concession to something derogatory or prejudicial, and
- It is a surrender of principles.

The word even has common negative connotations since one speaks of being caught in a “compromising” situation. Similarly, “Kompromat” is a Russian derivative word from the English that means a folder of evidence or materials to be used to blackmail a target.

Nonetheless, a Pew Research study completed in 2014** concluded most Americans seem to prefer an outcome of 50/50 where splitting the difference is the right end-result. Most Americans want their leaders to compromise, 56% prefer leaders who are willing to compromise, and only 39% prefer them to “stick to their positions.”

Conflict management advisors suggest that using compromise to resolve a disagreement or dispute is appropriate in the following situations: ##

- When the organization will benefit from both parties giving in on some demands.
- When differences have been "aired" and there is a need to move forward.
- When it is unrealistic to totally satisfy everyone involved in the disagreement.
- When the goals of both parties have equal importance and merit.
- When the situation requires a quick resolution, even if temporary.
- When there are options, and negotiation will help to reach agreement.
- When "splitting the difference" is the fair and best solution to a potential stalemate.
- When maintaining relationships is more important than continued disagreement.
- When the parties can agree to disagree and live with the decision.

Mediators agree that compromise is difficult but “*governing a democracy without compromise is impossible,*” and they point out that compromise is “*the hardest way to govern except all the others.*” ***

So what mindset is required that lead to a favorable climate for compromise?

A compromising mindset sees compromise not as an occasion to rigidly stand on principle or even abandon principles to reach agreement, but as an opportunity to adjust one’s goals to improve the status quo. Gutmann and Thompson*** propose this will included “principled prudence” and “mutual respect.”

Principled prudence: One needs to distinguish between compromises of principle and compromises of interest, i.e. choices between values and things. Interests tend to be choices like income, wealth, or objects money can buy. Nonmaterial interests that could be sacrificed might be pride, stature, reputation, or specific judgements. One might also accept some compromises of principle, but not those that would violate a basic human

value of some kind. Avishai Margalit has argued there are “decent” vs “indecent” compromises, where indecent ones would perpetuate cruelty and humiliation. ^{##}

Mutual respect: The second requirement for the compromising mindset is to avoid the willful opposition and mistrust that negates any possibility of compromise. It is necessary to deliberately negotiate in good faith and restrain suspicions of ulterior motives. It is required to accept that one’s adversaries are also motivated on honest principles and sincerely desire a resolution that would end conflict, provide a useful solution, and allow everyone to move on.

Neither of the mindset suggestions above are easy. Often the path between right and wrong solutions are extremely fuzzy, and intense frustration can lead again to mutual mistrust.

So, given a compromising mindset with principled prudence and mutual respect, how else does one engage in compromise? A skilled negotiator must be prepared to:



- Let things go once a concession is made...
- Rethink expectations and reprioritize goals....
- Show appreciation for concessions made by the other party....
- Share beliefs, emotions and sincerity at each stage....
- Remain optimistic....
- Avoid inappropriate and premature celebrations that might jeopardize any final agreement by demeaning, disparaging, or belittling difficult concession made by the other side....

Perhaps the best approach to all such problems of compromise is to replace the mantra to “never surrender” with the intention to “never give up” without a balanced solution.

^{**} <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/section-4-political-compromise-and-divisive-policy-debates/> Consistent liberals overwhelmingly prefer leaders who compromise (by an 82% to 14% margin), while consistent conservatives voice a preference for leaders who stick to their positions by a 63% to 32% margin.

^{***} Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *The Case for Compromise*, Harvard Magazine, July 2012
<https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2012/07/the-case-for-compromise>

^{##} Avishai Margalit, 2009, *On Compromises and Rotten Compromises*, Princeton University Press, 240 pp.

Dale Eilerman, 2006, *Agree to Disagree – The Use of Compromise in Conflict Management*, Mediate.com <https://www.mediate.com/articles/eilermanD7.cfm>

PEACEBUILDING IN THE WEST
Lessons learned from infusing sustainable peace studies
at the University of Ngozi in Burundi, East Africa
Bill Timpson

NOTE: Bill Timpson has also had a long career at Colorado State University in its School of Education, directing the Center for Teaching and Learning for six years, and more recently focusing on international work on sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation of differences.

The following material is adapted from his 2002 book, *Teaching and Learning Peace* (Madison, WI: Atwood), a text that is being used for the infusion of sustainable peace studies into the curriculum at the University of Ngozi and other campuses in Burundi. These ideas are equally relevant for schools, colleges and universities in the U.S. as well as in our churches, organizations and businesses. Everyone can benefit when conflicts are resolved through improved cooperation.

COOPERATION

Argentina's Adolfo Perez Esquivel was awarded the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize for his courageous and tireless work coordinating Servicio Paz y Justicia (Service for Peace and Justice), an organization dedicated to nonviolent social change and human rights protections in Latin America. Despite widespread harassment, persecution, imprisonment and killings, the response of repressive and military dictatorships to any dissent, Esquivel and his colleagues have eschewed any armed retaliation.

At the heart of their effort has been a core commitment to cooperation along with the communication and coordination necessary to bring diverse viewpoints to the table for meaningful discussions and reconciliation. Yet, those are only their short-term goals, for at the core has also been a commitment to addressing widespread inequities as a foundation for sustainable peace in the region. As educators, there is much we can learn from the use of cooperation for such large and meaningful efforts in the real world.

Bishops, priests, pastors and laypeople were seeking a "way of liberation" consonant with the gospel; situations of injustice were clamoring for attention. Efforts—often limited and isolated—to bring about change nonviolently were being made; there was a need for coordination, communication, and collaboration among persons and groups concerned for nonviolent change...Because of this reality of the systematic, widespread, and prolonged violation of human rights, Servicio was led to make human rights a principal program emphasis which was Latin American in scope and won worldwide interest and support. It was while active in that effort that Adolfo was arrested in April 1977 and imprisoned without charges for fourteen months, after which he spent another fourteen months in "restricted freedom" (*Chartier, 2000, p. 100*).

In the context of an increasingly interdependent world, cooperative groups represent one way for you to teach peacemaking at a skill level that is both practical and meaningful, where people work together to achieve common goals, assisting and supporting each other's learning while resolving any issues that arise along the way. As an instructor or group leader, you also get to interact with them in their small groups on more of a personal scale.

By grouping individuals with different abilities, backgrounds and viewpoints, you can ensure a diverse perspective on the content under study as well as a diverse context for the use of *prosocial* skills—for example, listening, empathy, consensus seeking—so essential for a vibrant society and a healthy democracy. When managed effectively, groups can also provide a social foundation for the development of critical and creative thinking (Timpson & Doe, 2008).

Learning groups also represent a powerful alternative or supplement to the traditional lecture or presentation format. By augmenting large class or group meetings with small cooperative group activities, you share some of the responsibility for instruction with students and shift authority from a strict hierarchy to one that is more horizontal. Solutions and conclusions are not just imposed from on high. Each small group assumes some control over a particular domain of the curriculum. Students and group members generally become much more active. They must take initiative, even risk.

Active learning

Cooperative groups require that people engage actively with the material, topic or project. The learning process becomes more personalized as everyone interacts with the other group members in ways which are personally meaningful, offering ideas, listening to the others, reaching for agreement, dividing up responsibilities, checking on progress, attempting to resolve differences and tensions. A learning group is also a place where people can speak about ideas they do not yet fully understand. By sharing, listening and reflecting, they can become more aware of their own thinking and beliefs.

People can also discover what they *don't* know. Unlike the lecture or presentation format, where information is presented in a sequential and orderly manner, group learning can help people identify their own intellectual blind spots, where their thinking may be unformed, flawed or confused.

Collaborative projects can encourage members to experiment with ideas and eventually deepen their understanding of core concepts, integrating new material into a more meaningful, coherent and defensible system. With this kind of *constructivist* learning, people make new information their own.

This quality of *action* has been important to the peace movement despite the inference of inactivity in the very notion of pacifism. In truth, pacifism has been difficult for many to accept in the face of hostile threats, for example, the rise of Hitler and Fascism. Written in 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. describes one of his most important insights, when he realized how active Gandhi meant nonviolent resistance to be. The “other cheek” would

not be meekly turned when slapped. Instead, a campaign would be mounted to appeal to a higher moral code of behavior and shame the aggressor.

My study of Gandhi convinced me that true pacifism is not nonresistance to evil, but nonviolent resistance to evil. Between the two positions, there is a world of difference. Gandhi resisted evil with as much vigor and power as the violent resistor, but he resisted with love instead of hate. True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power...It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflictor of it, since the latter only multiplied the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart (King, 2000, p. 69).

Cognitive and affective outcomes

For the peace movement, it has also been important to raise public awareness, build support and influence policy makers through rallies, petition drives, teach-ins and the like. In *the classroom*, David and Roger Johnson (1994) have reminded us of the power of cooperative learning. In the cognitive domain, they can point to thirty years of research demonstrating the superiority of group learning across a wide range of factors: for mastery of concepts and principles, enhanced verbal abilities, reasoning, problem solving skills, creative thinking, and general self-awareness as well as an improved ability to view ideas in proper perspective.

By engaging actively with factual information, concepts or principles, people in groups can show an increased ability to retain, apply and transfer new knowledge. In addition, they can develop democratic values and a greater acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. Conflict resolution and peacemaking certainly draw on these same skills and abilities.

When groups function well, the Johnsons also claim that improved interpersonal communication will improve. With some guidance on your part, people can use their groups as mini-labs for learning how to listen and express themselves better, how to address problems, negotiate and reach consensus. Leadership abilities can develop. The involvement of group members often produces more varied input, and here diversity can provide a distinct advantage.

As people from different backgrounds contribute, discussions can expand and deepen. Better and more creative decisions can result. Without these kinds of cooperative experiences, of reaching across divisions, it is easy to see how isolated and antagonistic groups, whether inside or outside schools, will only deepen their dislike for each other and sharpen their differences.

The role for the instructor or group leader

Admittedly, collaborative learning has its own inherent challenges and complexities. Bouton and Rice (1983) point out that the success of individuals in mastering course content or material correlates positively with the quality of the interaction taking place

among members of the group. Using group learning, however, does not mean abdicating your responsibility; rather, you shift your focus toward designing and managing activities where people can be active in supporting each other's understanding. Michaelsen (1983) describes the tasks facing teachers who choose to use learning groups. They include:

- Forming the groups
- Building and maintaining group cohesiveness
- Sequencing instructional activities
- Organizing material
- Developing and managing group-oriented classroom activities
- Evaluating performance
- Providing feedback.

In all of this, your role as manager of the group experience is vital. To do this well may take time. If you are used to more traditional lecturing, you will need to develop a different set of skills for effective group facilitation. For example, you will want to monitor groups closely so that workloads are distributed fairly and all students contribute to the communal effort. Some groups may require regular supervision in order to stay on task. You may also have to watch out for "collaborative" misinformation where incorrect "solutions" are passed around unchecked.

As for assessment, most instructors or group leaders who use cooperative learning establish mechanisms for measuring individual and group progress. If you decide to assign a group grade or evaluation, you can expect a mixed response: on one hand, individuals will typically appreciate the support and assistance they receive from other group members. On the other hand, they do not want to be held hostage to slackers who fail to follow through on their promises.

Ask people about their experiences in groups and you will often hear frustration from some about feeling exploited. While this anxiety can create tensions within groups, it can also promote greater effort and enhance performance, both collectively and individually. Good communication skills as well as a sound understanding of group processes can make even difficult situations a viable laboratory for meaningful learning.

When the time comes to evaluate a project, it is a good idea to require group members to evaluate their own performance. After assuring everyone that the information they provide will be kept confidential, ask them to identify positive aspects of the group experience, individuals or situations which were problematic, and what insights or recommendations they can offer. In addition, you might try requiring students to maintain a journal where they can explore their own reactions to this assignment and, thereby, develop greater awareness about group process. All of this information can help you fine tune your future use of the group-learning format.

Impact

Because group assignments provide valuable support and assistance for individual group members, they serve as a kind of instructional infrastructure, empowering people to assume greater responsibility for their own learning. Through interdependence, they can

learn to communicate more effectively with peers, to work efficiently with others, to define a task, to divide up labor, to resolve conflicts and more. The mutual support students experience can encourage risk-taking, another quality that supports learning.

Well-managed group projects can also contribute to a sense of community and camaraderie, resulting in a general boost in morale for everyone. Apathy, absenteeism, and poor performance often decline. In a similar vein, Maimon (1983) recommends collaborative groups as a means to overcome the isolation and loneliness experienced by some. Unlike scientists, who commonly work in groups in the laboratory, others often spend many solitary hours at work. At the undergraduate level, however, the situation facing students may be very different. Tobias (1992), for example, notes that many talented students often report feeling discouraged in large introductory science classes which are information driven, graded competitively on a curve and, accordingly, are inherently isolating.

A CONVERSATION AMONG CONTRIBUTORS

NOTE: In the process of developing these materials, the three of us have had some intriguing conversations that you as a reader might consider as a secondary benefit of taking on some of these ideas. Here are some of the exchanges we had.

Bill,

I have been reading some of the works of Reinhold Niebuhr, the American Theologian and Philosopher. Currently I am reviewing his book **Moral Man and Immoral Society**. You can find a free pdf copy of the book at:

<http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-2/Religion-Online.org%20Books/Niebuhr,%20Reinhold%20-%20Moral%20Man%20and%20Immoral%20Society%20-%20Study%20in.pdf>

In Chapter 4 he considers **The Morality of Nations** in which he argues that the morality of individuals tends to be more ethical than group relations. He notes that nations are inherently “selfish”; hence, nations tend to look out primarily for the interests of their own citizens, and they are territorial societies reinforced by nationality and the authority of the state.

The selfishness of nations is proverbial. It was a dictum of George Washington that nations were not to be trusted beyond their own interest. “No state,” declares a German author (Johannes Haller), “has ever entered a treaty for any other reason than self-interest... A statesman who has any other motive would deserve to be hung.”

While rapid means of communication have increased the breadth of knowledge about world affairs among citizens of various nations, and the general advance of education has ostensibly promoted the capacity to think rationally and justly upon the inevitable conflicts of interest between nations, **there is nevertheless little hope of arriving at a perceptible increase of international morality through the growth of intelligence and the perfection of means of communication.** The development of international commerce, the

increased economic interdependence among the nations, and the whole apparatus of a technological civilisation, increase the problems and issues between nations much more rapidly than the intelligence to solve them can be created.

Although written in the 1930s Niebuhr remarks that as a result of an "America First" policy after WW I:

America pursued a selfish and foolhardy tariff policy until it, together with other imbecilities in international life, contributed to the ruin of prosperity in the whole world.

He is very pessimistic about the ultimate ability of nations to pursue ethical options like peace when contrasted with self interest.

In other words the nation is a corporate unity, held together much more by force and emotion, than by mind. Since there can be no ethical action without self-criticism, and no self-criticism without the rational capacity of self-transcendence, it is natural that national attitudes can hardly approximate the ethical. Even those tendencies toward self-criticism in a nation which do express themselves are usually thwarted by the governing classes and by a certain instinct for unity in society itself. ... It is therefore probably inevitable that every society should regard criticism as a proof of a want of loyalty. He argues that altruistic passions of unselfishness are "sluiced" into the reservoirs of nationalism, and the unqualified character of this devotion results in the nation's tendency to use the resulting power and freedom without moral restraint.

Apparently, Niebuhr's thinking led him to conclude that simple liberalism and a search for peace was unrealistic and naive given the nature of mankind. He concluded peace was desirable...but it could only be obtained by "political realism" that sometimes would involve force and war to attain it.

What do you think?

Bob

Bob,

Important considerations. I still find the work on Elise Boulding in *The Cultures of Peace* persuasive in that we can identify and build off the successes of different regions and nations in promoting and benefitting from their efforts at peace, e.g., where I have had direct experience—Northern Ireland, Burundi, South Korea. The UN is another example where troops can serve a “peacekeeping” role even when their history has been tarnished at times. We do need educational systems worldwide to focus more on the skills of handling complex negotiations. A historic focus on memorized knowledge (truths) does not prepare young people for roles in promoting peace. It is so much easier to whip people into hysterical frenzies for attacks or defenses.

Let's keep discussing.

Bill

Bill and Bob,

Thank you for including me in this interesting discussion. I share your thought that major changes in international education systems to focus more on skills like empathy and communication would make a big difference. I also wonder (with hope) about the impact that more and more people having the opportunity to travel and live in other countries will have. I see it expanding what individuals consider their “in” group from the nation to an idea of a larger human community. We are less selfish with family, friends, people we are close with, and as those networks of interpersonal relationship are increasingly spread around the globe, I hope that it will have some impact. Thank you again for sharing

Lindsey