Turning Lemons into Lemonade

Public Conflict Resolution

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When you hear the word

"conflict"

what images come to mind?

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- "The goal of organizational leadership is not to eliminate conflict, but to use it."

- "Conflict is a predictable social phenomenon and should be channeled to useful purposes."

Source: Lippitt, Gordon, et.al, "Cutting Edge trends in organization development," Training and Development Journal, 1989.

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Public Conflict

- Dying communities and organizations avoid conflict or work on it in ways that destroy relationships.

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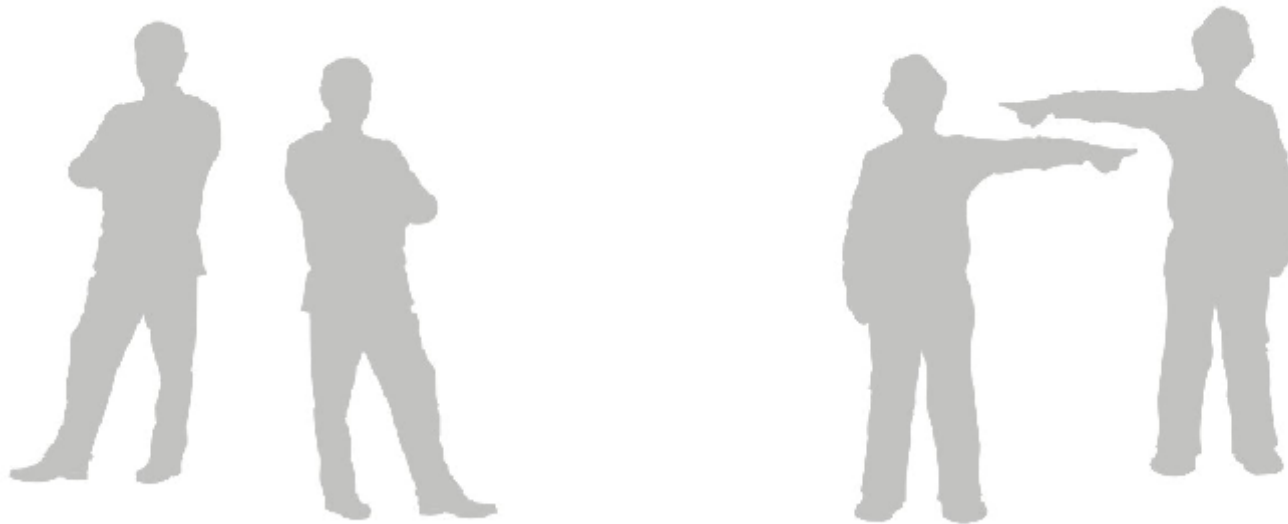
Conflict

Successful communities and organizations anticipate conflict and work on it in ways that keep relationships intact.

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Positive aspects of public conflict:

- Problem addressed / action taken.

- Conflict resolved.

- Better long-term relationship.

- Stimulate creativity.

- Personal / professional growth.

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Positive aspects of public conflict:

- Strengthen democracy (Participatory problem-solving).

- Change for "common good."

- Can live with solution.

- Leadership emerges.

- Community / organization growth.

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Negative aspects of public conflict:

- No results.
- Little shared problem solving.
- Little creativity.
- Destroys relationships.
- Destruction of democracy.
- No sense of "we."

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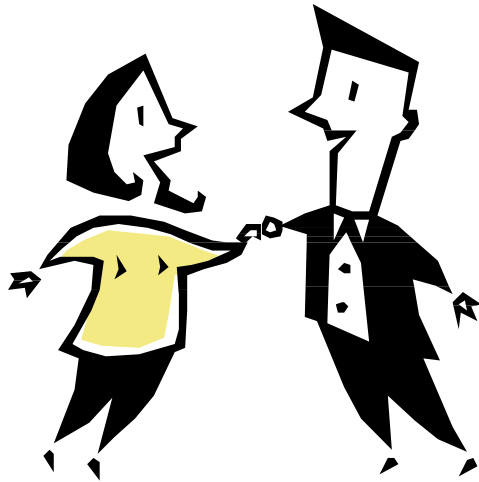
Negative aspects of public conflict:

- Someone wins - someone loses.
- Unwillingness to work together.
- Expensive litigation.
- Community declines.
- Leadership declines.
- Loss of self-esteem.

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Why accent the positive aspects?

- "Shadow of the future" -- sustainable relationships.

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Symptoms of the Abilene Paradox:

▌ Failure to communicate real needs and beliefs.

▌ Invalid and inaccurate information leads to counter productive results.

▌ Members of group experience frustration (someone blamed).

▌ Cycle.

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Reasons for the Abilene Paradox:

▐ Action anxiety.

▐ Negative fantasies.

▐ Failure to assess real risk.

▐ Fear of separation.

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Group think = False consensus

- The group puts direct or subtle pressure on any member who questions group stereotypes, plans, goals or commitments.

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Symptoms of group think:

▌ Invulnerability - excessive optimism.

▌ Discount warnings about inadequacies of group assumptions.

▌ Unquestioned belief in group's morality.

▌ Stereotyped views of "enemies" as evil or dumb.

▌ Share illusion of unanimity.

▌ Self-appointed mind guards to protect group from adverse information.

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