



Communities in Conflict...

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CDSS WEB CHAT
TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023

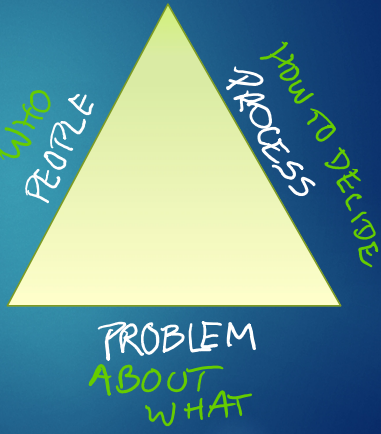


Context

- ▶ **Lively communities always have hot issues.**
 - ▶ Be glad! People care. They aren't shrugging and leaving.
 - ▶ Today: Dramatic pandemic break. Issues that contain political overtones. Generational transitions. A positive: grateful just to be dancing together!
 - ▶ Subtexts of most of our conflicts:
 - ▶ Who do we want to welcome in our community? (All communities exclude as well as include)
 - ▶ What aspects of dancing & music are key to my/our joyful participation?

People, Process, Problem

- ▶ 3 main aspects of group conflict
- ▶ Who is good at one or more of these aspects? → your team
- ▶ The process you develop this time can help you have an effective process the next time.



Focus on Community Well-Being

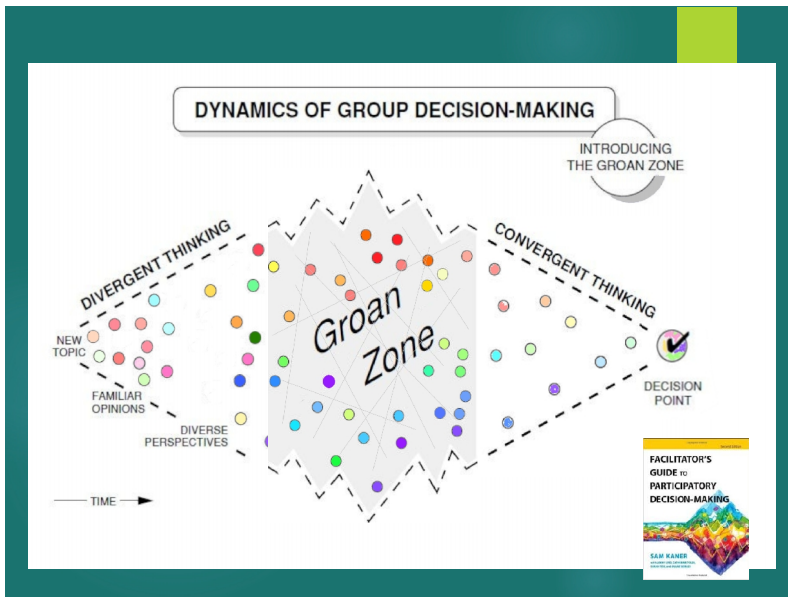
- ▶ Primary focus for organizers. (Making decisions about the current issue is secondary)
 - ▶ How to *build* relationships while working things through?
 - ▶ How to disagree without sliding into dislike?
 - ▶ How to encourage caring, attentive conversations?
 - ▶ How to balance inclusion & transparency with clear and fair boundaries, respect for privacy

We're in this together

- ▶ **KEY: Avoid identifying or reinforcing factions**
 - ▶ Immediately rephrase Us vs Them language and gently break up segregating behavior
 - ▶ Talk about ideas, proposals, issues, without tagging them ("David's request for- The possibility of a mask optional set")
- ▶ Keep affirming that we can dance together, we can feel affection for each other, EVEN as we have ongoing disagreement
- ▶ Leave the door open: if someone withdraws, convey your well wishes and that they're welcome to visit/dance/play/sing with the group whenever they feel okay about that.

Decisions

- ▶ **Be clear up front about how decisions will be made**
 - ▶ Who will ultimately decide, and time frame
 - ▶ How will input, group conversations be encouraged
 - ▶ What facts and advice will deciders rely on (law, public health, advisors, group input)
- ▶ People tend to accept not getting their preferred outcome IF....
 - ▶ They felt heard
 - ▶ They feel that the decision process was fair



The Groan Zone

- ▶ Explaining "It's okay we're just all going through the 'groan zone'" helps people feel a little lighter and more patient.
- ▶ Organizer judgment: How deep & long to go?
 - ▶ How important is the issue to the life of the whole community? What deadlines are you facing? What potential fallout? Potential benefits?
- ▶ In my experience, groups that go through the groan zone with care for each other often gain members afterward.

Perspective

- ▶ **Acknowledge losses**
 - ▶ Whatever decision we make, something precious to some of us will be diminished or lost. It's okay to be sad about that.
 - ▶ Acknowledge that for some, loss outweighs gains.
- ▶ Focus relentlessly on a **positive future:**
 - ▶ Turn complaints and dislikes into a positive vision "So you'd like a culture where only positive comments are made about people's clothing"
 - ▶ Counteract "either / Or" thinking: Expect that with patience and conversation new useful ideas will emerge.

Perspective, con't

- ▶ You will lose some people. You will gain some people.
 - ▶ Dances and songs are a reflection, a distillation of what people value in community. As our notions of community and personhood change, so will our songs, so will how we like to dance.
- ▶ It's JUST A DANCE. Keep it joyful. Express hope that community members accept that the upcoming decision will be less-than-ideal and less-than-permanent.

Assumptions

- ▶ This is how we've always done it. This is the traditional way...
- ▶ This person is going to think / react THIS way.
- ▶ People who are _____ (younger, male, older, non-binary, experienced, female, new) going to think / react THAT way.
- ▶ There are 2 options.

Communication tips: Online

- ▶ **Avoid** discussions via **email** !!!!!
 - ▶ Tends to be received as more accusatory or hardline, less nuanced, than writer intended.
 - ▶ Increases factionalization. Argument increases, listening decreases, personal connection decreases.
 - ▶ Can be forwarded in long angry chains to ANYbody and sticks around forever
- ▶ Be old-fashioned – reply "thanks for your message, let's talk" then pick up the phone or meet in person.
- ▶ If it's already making the rounds, create a (private?) online space where people can post and comment, with guidelines and moderation—so everyone can be in the loop.

Communication tips: Surveys

- ▶ One tool, to be used WITH discussions and deliberations
- ▶ Pro: they feel scientific and inclusive. They give you numbers to help make more objective decisions.
- ▶ Pre-work: Useful surveys grow OUT of first talking with a range of people in order to frame clear and useful questions, and to understand what the emotional underpinnings are.
- ▶ Con: surveys can lessen group conversations and listening, can miss other perspectives and possibilities.

Communication tips: Meetings

- ▶ Do your people homework: talk with all your key people before holding a group meeting or making a major decision.
- ▶ Structure each meeting carefully, guidelines communicated well in advance, facilitators prepared.
- ▶ Ways non-attenders can participate, know what happened.
- ▶ Emphasize listening, broadening understanding of issues and possibilities
- ▶ Appreciate participation, vulnerability, caring, efforts to understand/incorporate others, their ability to make good changes.

Supporting the organizers

- ▶ Love your organizers! They are in a hard spot lately.
 - ▶ Tasked with hot issue decisions in a changing environment
 - ▶ Expected to be experts – in gender issues, in public health, in liability, in discrimination... Members can take offense “how can you hurt me like that?”
 - ▶ People confuse being heard with getting their way.
 - ▶ Invisible work: we clap for our musicians and callers and sound-people but not as often for our organizers.
 - ▶ Join CDSS and FB organizer forums for wise advice and companionship.

Much love and joy to each one of you for caring so much about your dance and song communities.

