



Group Decision Tip

E-mailed every two weeks to help groups make good decisions

Causes of conflict, and cures

In principle, the cause of most conflict is misunderstanding. The parties don't have the same facts, same experience, same perspective, and don't fully appreciate how someone else could see it differently. A second cause of conflict is fundamental difference of values. This is where the parties understand the facts and each other but they simply have different values. For example one person believes in Jesus as savior, another does not. Each person's beliefs are deeply rooted and not easily changed.

Third, parties are in conflict because of some outside issue, something that has nothing to do with the immediate issue at hand. The conflict might be because of some incident between the parties that happened years ago and has never been dealt with or because of a mental disorder or an irrational fear or an addiction which is influencing someone's judgment or behavior. An outside issue is preventing one or more key people from seeing or acting clearly.

Practical Tip: When conflicts arise, work first to develop shared understanding. Talk, listen, express truth, learn, be open-minded, let go, ponder, talk some more. If differing values are the cause, identify the values you have in common. Identify your common goals. See how you believe in similar things but have different ways of acting on them. Document and work on the things you agree on and let go of the rest, for now.

If a debilitating outside issue is at play, peace will only come about if the issue is dealt with. If it is your issue, deal with it, seek help, do the personal work. If the issue is not dealt with by the parties, an outside authority must be invoked to make and enforce a decision.

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