



Taking Your Power Back: Making Interpersonal Relationships Work For Your Political Organization BY TERESA de BELLIS

HOW TO: **WORK TOGETHER POLITICALLY**

Working together in a group can be a rewarding experience, or it can be quite a negative one. When working with a number of people, there are some **key principles** to understand that will help you navigate the disparate thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and opinions of the people that make up your group and move everyone toward your common political goal.

- Ideas are the most important bonding/binding element in your organization. The ideas that offer the most freedom are the largest, most evolved ideas, and you need to reach to find them, and discover their truths. There are always more of them. They have the power to unite your group.
- The more responsibility you take, the more freedom you have. This principle is so vast, it applies to all areas of human endeavor and offers growth and resolution.
- No one, no matter who they are, or how powerful they are, can take your power away from you. You must give it to them.
- You create your own reality, either by consciously creating it, or by allowing it, via your thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, choices, and decisions. You create all of it, with no exception. The tools you use are your desire, your imagination, and your expectation. (See attached material where current understanding of the laws of physics and the information from Concept: Synergy's "Manifesting What You Want" explains this principle.)

HOW TO: **UNITE YOUR GROUP AND INSPIRE YOUR MEMBERS TO ACTION**

1 IDENTIFY YOUR GROUP'S GOAL, WHETHER IT BE ACTIVE, OR INTELLECTUAL, AND AGREE TO WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL

Every time your group gets together to meet, all members should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the meeting and what goals you expect to have accomplished by the end of the meeting. You can write up a meeting agenda beforehand and make sure that all members have a copy, so that everyone's expectations of what will happen will be clear. Speakers' discussions should be related to the agreed-upon goals of your meeting. This established framework for discussion will help everyone stay on topic and on goal.

2 SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES FOR RESPECTFUL CONDUCT AND COMMUNICATION

- a. Setting clear boundaries for respectful conduct before communication begins will help you run your meeting and keep the line of discourse on track for the accomplishment of your goals. A widely used tool for setting respectful boundaries is the most commonly adopted parliamentary authority among informal organizations in the United States, Robert's Rules of Order, by Henry Martyn Robert. Originally published in 1876, the purpose of this book, according to Wikipedia's definition, "[...]is to] act as a guide for conducting meetings and making decisions as a group. [...] enable[s] assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum amount of time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion."
- b. If this tool does not seem appropriate to use to achieve your group's purpose, it is important that you do set some boundaries that will help you run a respectful, positive meeting, in which those voices who want to be heard and a common consensus reached. Limits placed on time for discussion are boundaries that can help you maintain order in a meeting when one person is using the microphone. Let the person who has the microphone know before they begin speaking that there will be a time limit for their use of it. You can also help them to keep track of time and agree upon a signal so that you will be able to unobtrusively indicate to them when their time for speaking is up.

3 LISTENING SKILLS, THINKING SKILLS, AND HOW TO APPLY THEM TO SERVE THE GOALS OF YOUR POLITICAL GROUP

Communication is an often misunderstood skill. It is a skill, and it is an ideal, and therefore good communication is something which you always work to improve within yourself. Listening well is equally important as being heard.

a. Be truthful, but tactful. Speaking your truth in the moment takes practice. When discussing a different point of view with someone, or a point of contention, it is helpful to use “I” statements, rather than “you” statements, as you are only responsible for your own point of view, and, nobody likes to be assessed by another when it comes to viewpoints. You will come to find that the people who do not want to hear your truth will eventually not come around (unless conflict is really the goal).

b. Remember that your truth is just that, it's yours. This is tricky. Your beliefs are the most powerful reality generating tool you have, and so ultimately, if you believe it to be true, you will find evidence of its truth, but your belief came first before there was evidence of it.

c. Listening requires thinking. As a society, we generally stopped thinking in the early to mid-seventies. We very much need this skill back in order to take responsibility for our republic. Thomas Jefferson said, “The price of a democracy is eternal vigilance” (though it was actually attributed earlier to John Philpot Curran around 1817). Keep in mind when you are listening to someone that it is an active process, that you are always listening to learn something new (none of us will ever know everything), and that you are actively engaged in searching for the most expansive ideas and truth that you can. Good thinking and listening skills will help you to add to and participate in thoughtful conversation, which serves to stimulate more thought, and more creativity.

4 HOW TO MITIGATES THE SITUATION WHEN A MEMBER IS ATTEMPTING TO DOMINATE THE DIALOGUE, OR TAKEOVER THE MEETING

Since you create your own reality, there is no place for blame in an assessment or understanding of what's happening, there is only an opportunity for you to take responsibility and change what you feel needs to change. This is actually very good news, but it may be taken to be bad news for those who would rather have other people make decisions and take their ability to respond (responsibility) away from them. In a political group, the more you understand that this is the truth, the more you will be able to identify those attitudes and beliefs in others that will not move your group forward toward your political goal. You can help your members remember that your organization will be successful when you work together without the need to dominate or be dominated by anyone. The model of equality without hierarchy works best. Once you recognize these truths, you will be able to respond quickly when you see that someone is attempting to dominate your agenda or takeover the meeting, and you can then lead the conversation around to a more constructive approach.

5 IDENTIFY WHAT EACH MEMBER BRINGS TO THE TABLE

Each member needs to bring their talents, skills, and their character to the group effort. Identifying what each member brings to the table will encourage confidence in all members. The group will rely on that member for their character, and together, all of the parts are greater than the sum the of the group's effort. Character, usually thought of as the frequency by which you live your principles, is a relatively unexplored phenomenon, and is sadly lacking in many of our political leaders today. As an ideal, again it is a part of yourself that you always work to improve. Those qualities that humans need in order to grow are honor, loyalty, nobility, virtue, grace (gracious generosity), truth, courage, courtesy, gallantry (heroic courtesy), authority, service, and humility. (To find more about this information, see the Merlin-Arthur material by Lazaris/Concept: Synergy). Have each member in your group identify which among these qualities they have within them that is a strong part of who they are. It is the strength that they bring to the group for which they can be relied on to lead that will inspire others. These strengths may change within a person through time, but they need to become a focus in your organization and will inspire others in the community to reach for these important ideals within themselves as well.

6 A FEW THINGS ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL

More of us than we'd like to admit have had our political affiliation handed to us by our parents. Less people have given a lot of thought to what other parties have to say, and why they feel the way that they do. It is never helpful to limit your awareness and let your party dictate what you think. All political parties have some piece of reality that they have identified as important for health of our nation, and as such, it is worthy of your thoughtful attention. What you will find when you explore the other parties are some of the good people that make up this diverse country. They are not bad, or evil. When you let yourself fall into believing that rhetoric that the media knows keeps its viewers interested and boosts it ratings, you are at risk of continuing the divisive grip that has us fighting wars we need not fight for other

6 A FEW THINGS ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL (CONT)

people's agendas and brings our country to the brink of ruinous debt. Take a deep breath and try to understand what the other side cares about, from their point of view. It will help you to imagine solutions to problems that seem to have no solution, and to find a practical solution together, without compromise, that works.

7 THESE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

The political organization of which I am part has few members, but each member offers their skills, talents, and character to the group effort, without being asked or reminded to do so. Our members include a 17-year-old entrepreneur yak-farmer, a 77 year-old community activist with a long history of political involvement, a few ex-military, one female, and other successful business people. When we meet, we rarely get sidetracked by complaining about the political landscape, but rather we come interested to see each other again, and eager to contribute to the group effort. Last I heard, one member, by himself, put out 2,000 door-knockers, and hundreds of signs, without being asked to do so. Another member always brings his happiness and his humor to our meetings. Our leader leads without dominating (with humility), which in turn inspires action from the rest of us. All members take responsibility for our group's progress and outcome. Difficult communication is communicated directly, but tactfully, and our members hear that communication without becoming defensive. We are action oriented, set out to achieve tangible political goals, and have been successful to some extent, where we have put our focus.