

The Big House Project

Document: Conflict Management Procedures

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This document forms part of a package of ratified policy documents, that are intended to be read in conjunction with the "Associate Membership Agreement". The documents may be updated from time to time by the project's Decision Making Process. The full set of supporting documents includes, but is not limited to: the "Membership Process", "Decision Making Process", "Meeting Procedure", "Minutes Template" and the "Spending Policy". We wish to credit Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood for the basis of these documents, adapted under Creative Commons 4.0 BY NC SA, and these documents are released on the same terms.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Principles

- Conflict can be reframed as an opportunity to innovate, learn and heal.
- Conflicts often bring to light potential for personal development. eg they involve triggers or unconscious core beliefs.
- We will therefore engage with (rather than try to ignore) conflict, and address conflict using peaceful means.

General communication and conflict guidelines

- We will gently encourage each other to communicate using NVC, through such mechanisms as a clear present request, the time-out sign, and translating non-NVC statements rather than correcting.
- We will use I statements, and seek to avoid blame, judgement, criticism or demands.
- We will address issues efficiently and directly with the person or persons affected.
- In the first instance, members will attempt NVC if there is enough understanding / emotional space.
- Failing that, or upon the recommendation of other members, the affected members will seek another member to peer mediate using the process outlined below.
- It is the responsibility of each conflicted member to find out about and deal with their underlying unresolved developmental wounds. Because these mechanisms are unconscious, we need support to do this work, therefore members commit to seeking suitable therapy when needed.
- The group will maintain a list of willing peer mediators
- The group will provide regular NVC training to members

Conflict between members during meetings

- A member who becomes aware of process irregularities, or conflict among members of the group, should utilise the red or black cards as appropriate.
- The role of the facilitator and co-facilitator includes monitoring the energy of the group. As such they may point out any unspoken / simmering issues as needed, and seek direction from the group as to how to resolve the matter
- If the matter can be resolved quickly, it may be dealt with in the meeting, or it needs more time, a mediator can be appointed and the matter to be addresses outside of the meeting.
- In the event of a highly contentious matter arising during the Decision Making Process, the group should seek additional support from a trained external facilitator.

Disputes between a member and the cooperative.

- In the event of a legal dispute arising between a member (or former member) and the cooperative, the parties (define parties) to the dispute agree not to commence court or arbitration proceedings relating to the dispute unless it has first complied with the provisions in this section.
- Where possible in the first instance an attempt should be made to address the matter using the Decision Making Process.
- Failing that, or if the affected party is a former member, then the affected party should give written notice of the dispute to the other party, and the parties should, within 21 days, or as soon as the mediator is available, hold a meeting in the presence of a mediator. The cooperative may at its discretion assign two members to represent the coop, and the affected party may bring a support person.
- The mediator is to be, where possible, a neutral person chosen by agreement between the parties, but in the absence of agreement between the parties, a person appointed by the Arbitration & Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre NZ Ltd, or failing that, by the President of the Arbitrators & Mediators Institute of NZ.
- The parties to the dispute must, in good faith, attempt to settle the dispute by mediation. The parties must attend a minimum of three mediation meetings, and a minimum period of 90 days, before considering the matter to be unresolvable.
- The mediator cannot determine the dispute. The mediation must be confidential and without prejudice. The costs of the mediation are to be shared equally between the parties unless otherwise agreed.
- If this mediation process does not result in the dispute being resolved, each party may seek to resolve the dispute in accordance with either arbitration or otherwise at law.

Guidelines for Peer Mediation

Step 1: Introduction

Set the session duration, explain the process and the ground-rules.

Confidentiality agreement.

Mediator stays neutral, and does not give advice.

Encourage 'I' statements, and reflective listening.

Step 2: Gathering Points of View

Each party gets the opportunity to tell, uninterrupted, his or her side of the conflict.

The mediator supports by using active listening skills (empathizing, asking questions, summarizing).

This stage allows the parties to uncover the interests, feelings and needs that lie beneath the stated positions.

Step 3: Create a List of Possible Solutions

The mediator helps the parties brainstorm possible solutions for the conflict.

At this stage just collect ideas without evaluating them. It is about lateral thinking.

The ultimate goal is to help the parties reach a win-win solution, so that both of their needs are met.

Step 4: Evaluate Options

Mediator helps participants to evaluate the different options.

This stage represents a turning point in the conflict; the parties are no longer working against each other but are instead working together to resolve the conflict.

Step 5. Create an Agreement

Who, what, when, where, how