

THOUGHTS, WORDS & DEEDS

Think About It.

Talk About It.

Do Something About It.

Building unity, community & connection
with groups that are not quite there yet.

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Teamwork & Teamplay

Contents

Introduction by Dr. Jim Cain
The Basics of Conflict Resolution
The TW&D Curriculum
Activities for Thinking Together
Activities for Talking Together
Activities for Working Together
Summary
Books and References

Introduction

by Dr. Jim Cain

Occasionally in my work as a teambuilding facilitator, author and consultant I encounter groups that are having difficulty working together. The challenges faced by these groups range from simple to complex, as do the solutions needed to solve these challenges. I've noticed that three essential elements are needed to assist groups in conflict in working successfully together. I originally started with just two elements (words & actions) and found my model incomplete. In addition to these two words I firmly believe that thinking is also an essential element in the process, hence the title of Thoughts, Words & Deeds (or TW&D for short). Consider these three elements as essential tools in the group development process. By learning how to use these tools in the relatively safe warm-up stage of conflict resolution, participants are better able to skillfully use them in the actual conflict resolution process.

After the most recent presidential election season, it was only too obvious that our country is divided. No matter which major candidate you supported, nearly the same number of people supported the other. Throughout the election process I often heard phrases such as 'us and them' rather than 'we.' Because of all this and more I wanted to do something. In February of 2016, I began working on a new book with the working title of *Unity, Community & Connection*. I finished writing the book on the evening before election day. A week later, I began creating a plan that would become the curriculum you now hold in your hands. Consider it my contribution to helping our nation, our community, our world work together, even when our opinions, beliefs, values and ideas divide us.

The Basics of Conflict Resolution

One simplified negotiation model suggests the following five elements for a positive outcome to the conflict resolution process.

Preparation – Conversation – Summary – Discussion – Agreement

I like to think that the TW&D Curriculum fits very much in the preparation element, but provides useful tools and skills that will assist in all of the other elements as well. You can find additional references for conflict resolution in the resource section near the end of this paper.

The TW&D Curriculum

I want to be very clear about the curriculum I've created and am sharing here. This is not a curriculum for conflict resolution, it is what should come before two groups engage in the conflict resolution process. I believe that by participating in the activities presented in this paper, participants will be prepared to engage in a conflict resolution process and obtain a successful outcome. In the same way that world-class athletes warm-up before a race, the TW&D curriculum prepares world-class communities to engage in the conflict resolution process. By thinking, talking and working together participants learn to use the very same skills that are necessary for success in the conflict resolution process.

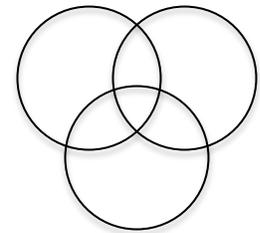
The TW&D Curriculum includes three substantial elements. First, it includes activities to help individuals think about their values, beliefs, opinions, ideas and behavior. Next is the talking stage, filled with activities that create conversation between participants. The final element is working together as a group. The activities in this stage of the curriculum are designed to encourage teamwork, decision making, creative problem solving, resource management, leadership and other skills valuable to the conflict resolution process.

By engaging participants in these skill-building activities, you will prepare them for a more successful conflict resolution process.

In the following sections of this paper, I will present a variety of information and activities to help you and your participants explore essential elements of working (and playing) together. Nearly all of the following information can be found in my book *100 Activities That Build Unity, Community & Connection* (ISBN 978-1-6067-9374-9) available from www.healthylearning.com. I recommend that you purchase a copy of this book and use it as you begin preparing your group to explore the process of working together, resolving conflict and transforming from 'us and them' to 'we!'

Activities for Thinking Together

TGR Model – I believe that there are three essential elements necessary for groups to be successful. A worthy task (something to do), the opportunity for growth (something new to learn), and the opportunity to build and maintain relationships (empathy). Not surprisingly, the activities in each of these three sections explore each of these three essential elements. You can find more information on the TGR Model in the Introduction section of my book.



Personal Pyramid – an activity that explores personal values, beliefs, traits, character and self-image.

First Impressions – an activity that initially involves guessing things about your partners and then learning the reality of those guesses.

The Trolley Problem – Philippa Foot created this unique dilemma and David Edmonds does an amazing job of bringing it (and several interesting variations) to life in the book *Would You Kill the Fat Man?* (ISBN 978-0-691-15402-2). I highly recommend that you find a copy of this book and invite partners (groups of two people) to discuss what they would do in such a situation.

Activities for Talking Together

The Story of Your Name – This activity builds an atmosphere of respect.

The Big Question – This activity invites participants to talk to anyone in the group.

The Walk of Life – This activity invites participants to share meaningful elements of their life.

Walk & Talk – This activity encourages participants to find things they have in common with a partner.

Activities for Working Together

Match Cards – A version of the memory game that can explore any subject you like. Start with the initial version exploring character, then create twelve word pairs specific to the needs of your group.

Not Knots – A consensus-building activity that teaches valuable collaborative skills.

Trust Walk – A simple activity that brings the element of trust to your group.

Part of the Rainbow – Explore how people can look at the same thing and yet see it differently.

Three Chairs – An activity that explores win-win solutions to challenges and problems.

Jigsaw Puzzle – paint a picture of cooperation to your group on the surface of a giant jigsaw puzzle and have them complete this challenge to reveal that image of success.

Bobsled – A fast-paced activity that requires communication and teamwork.

Magic Carpet – An activity that invites participants to share their goals and barriers.

Finding Your People – An activity that unites a group.

A Circle of Connection – An activity that builds connection between participants.

Virtual Slideshow – Use this activity not only to review but also to view what the future will look like.

Summary

While any group experiencing conflict has specific needs that are unique to that group, there are some essential and common elements that can help groups resolve their differences and work (and play) together successfully. By inviting participants to think critically about their beliefs, values, behavior, ideas and opinions they are given the opportunity to understand their motivation for the decisions they make. When given the opportunity to talk to others, participants gain confidence in an essential element of resolving conflict, talking openly about difficult issues. When given the chance to work hand-in-hand with people of different beliefs, participants gain insight and experience in working together. All three of these essential elements are valuable practice for the task ahead, resolving conflict within the group.

Books & References

100 Activities That Build Unity, Community & Connection by Jim Cain (ISBN 978-1-6067-9374-9)
The world's best icebreakers and so much more! Available from www.healthylearning.com

Would You Kill the Fat Man? by David Edmonds (ISBN 978-0-6911-5402-2) The Trolley Problem and What Your Answer Tells Us About Right and Wrong

The Conflict Compass by Michelle Cummings and Mike Anderson (ISBN 978-0-7575-8457-2)
Activities for Conflict Resolution and Prevention

Collaborative Intelligence by Dawna Markova and Angie McArthur (ISBN 978-0-8129-9490-2)
Thinking With People Who Think Differently

Ready-To-Use Conflict Resolution Activities for Secondary Students by Ruth Perlstein and Gloria Thrall (ISBN 978-0-1304-2905-6) Strategies for dealing with conflict in real-life situations plus guidelines for creating a peer mediation program

Common Ground by Cal Thomas and Bob Beckel (ISBN 978-0-0612-3634-1) How to Stop the Partisan War That is Destroying America

Changing the Conversation by Dana Caspersen (ISBN 978-0-1431-2686-7) The 17 Principles of Conflict Resolution

You can find more information about Dr. Jim Cain, his 16 books (so far!) and dozens of his teambuilding props by visiting the T&T website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com. You can also find this paper and many other valuable downloadable documents at the T&T website.

If you would like to invite Dr. Jim Cain to present a workshop based upon the content of this curriculum for your group, contact him at: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com.

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*Happiness is when
what you think,
what you say
and what you do
are in harmony.*

Mahatma Gandhi

The Thoughts, Words & Deeds Curriculum presented in this paper is the creation of Dr. Jim Cain of Teamwork & Teamplay. Most of the activities in this curriculum can be found in the book *100 Activities That Build Unity, Community & Connection* (ISBN 978-1-6067-9374-9) available from www.amazon.com, www.healthylearning.com and www.training-wheels.com.

For more information about TW&D, Teamwork & Teamplay or to invite Dr. Jim Cain to speak at your next event, contact him at: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com