

Doing Democracy

■ 10 Practical Arts ■

Frances Moore Lappé
- Small Planet Institute -

Doing Democracy: Ten Practical Arts

This guide is a companion to *Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save Our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life* and *Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity & Courage in a World Gone Mad*. It is designed for educators, group leaders, and any citizen who wants to become more powerful. Originally, it appeared in my book written with Paul Martin DuBois, *The Quickening of America* (Jossey-Bass, 1994). Tremendous thanks goes to Michael Kowalski who created the design.

We humans may be born innately social creatures; but to be effective in creating societies we want, it helps to approach democracy-making as a learned art. As with any art – from ballet to basketball – breaking the process down into its core elements can facilitate learning.

So we've chosen ten arts of democracy – a nice round number – not with any pretense of creating an exhaustive guide. Rather, these practices are a starting point. They contribute to enhanced decision-making, mutual regard, group learning and staying-power.

We're convinced that the better we become in practicing such arts, the more satisfying our public lives become. Our improved public practice also enhances our private lives as well.

We welcome you to send us your ideas for additional arts to include in this guide as well as examples from your own experience. Please offer critical feedback for making this guide more useful.

Thank you,

Frances Moore Lappé
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Living Democracy: The Practical Tools

In this section, we probe the heart and soul of democracy. We answer two key questions: What are the skills we need in order to interact with each other in public life so that we can solve our problems effectively? And how can we build the qualities of character that will create the kind of public culture America so desperately needs?

Let us take a moment to explain the concept of public culture by looking elsewhere, outside the United States.

From 1989 onward, outsiders marveled at the staggering pace of change throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Communism's political institutions – seemingly as rigid and immovable as the mammoth steel and cement structures that housed them – simply collapsed. Command economics gave way to the market. Secret police were disbanded. And the world celebrated when democracy seemed to be breaking out all over.

Yet as the 1990s wore on, and the euphoria wore off, it became clear that behind these highly visible structural changes, the reality of people's daily lives was *not* altering nearly so quickly – at least, not in positive ways. Not only did these societies appear unable to solve their problems, several dissolved into bloody conflict. The formal institutions could change dramatically, but that was not enough. Something else was needed.

But what is that something else? It is amorphous, to be sure. It's not nearly as clear-cut or visible as the structures of government or the rules of an economy. Nevertheless, that something else may be just as important to democracy as the rules in the books.

We call what's needed the *culture of democracy*, the essence of what we've come to call Living Democracy.

To a large extent, the culture of democracy is a set of expectations. How will we behave toward each other? What can we expect from our fellow citizens? What do officials expect from us? What norms are most important to us? What are the unspoken rules that we just assume will be followed in our daily interactions with ordinary people and with those in authority?

We've met people from all walks of life who are changing the culture of their institutions – from workplaces and newspapers to service agencies and schools. They're helping to shape a democratic culture that offers them much greater rewards.

Compared to Americans who work in authoritarian settings, they are different people, these Americans learning to live their democracy. They have different skills, different values, different expectations. They seem to have a different spirit and even developed different qualities of character.

We suspect that what's most important about them is that *they know how to get things done* in their public lives. That effectiveness and its rewards help to build and strengthen the personal qualities that, in turn, make them even more effective.

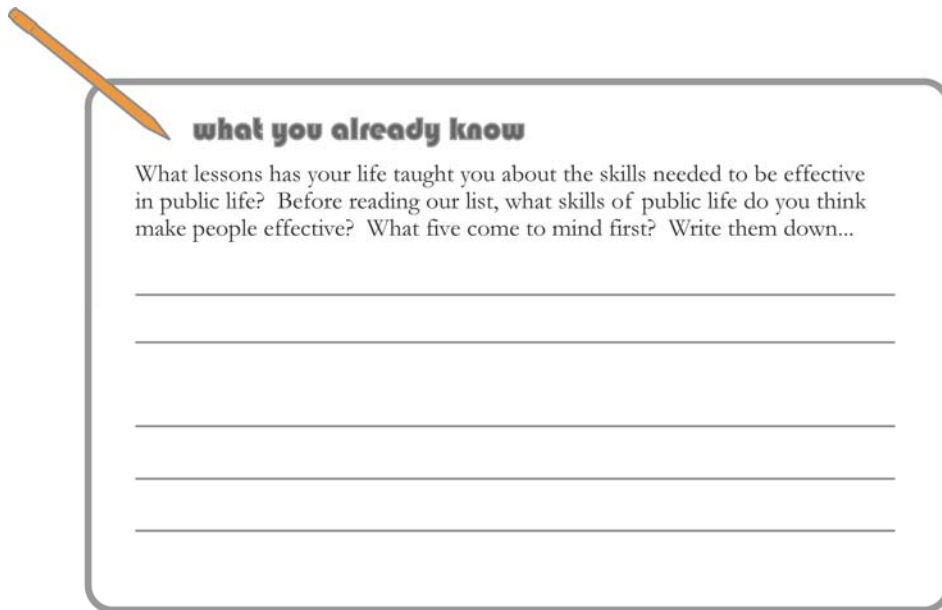
So we welcome you to continue with us on this unique journey. Explore the skills – the arts of democracy – that are required for this enhanced effectiveness in public life. In Chapter One we discuss the skills most often used in one-on-one interactions: active listening, creative conflict, mediation, and negotiation. Chapter Two focuses on skills most often used in group settings: political imagination, public dialogue, public judgment, celebration and appreciation, evaluation and reflection, and mentoring. In each of these chapters on the democratic arts, we suggest practical guidelines to help you develop these skills and provide real-life examples of how these skills have been put to good use.

Then, in Chapter Three, we'll explore the Democratic Self. Here we reflect on those qualities of character you may choose to cultivate in order to enhance your life.

CHAPTER ONE

Mastering the Arts of Living Democracy: One-on-One Skills

You'll meet many people in these pages. Their lives are becoming more satisfying, because they are learning how to move from hopelessness to effective problem solving. For them, a new way of thinking is becoming a new way of being.



what you already know

What lessons has your life taught you about the skills needed to be effective in public life? Before reading our list, what skills of public life do you think make people effective? What five come to mind first? Write them down...

But to translate understanding into action requires that we hone new skills. We call the skills that make possible effective public life the *arts of democracy*. Here we'll highlight just ten of the democratic arts we've seen people practicing to achieve breakthroughs in public life.

We've chosen the term *art* quite deliberately. Art to us sounds pretty important. It's something people take seriously, and that's exactly the point. We want to elevate the notion of democratic practice to something that is highly valued, prized – something that is actively sought by all of us.

Yes, but we know some people are put off by the notion of art, as in, "I could never be an artist; I don't have what it takes." So we need to explain further.

Art doesn't have to suggest something exclusive, something at which only the talented few can succeed. Developing an art is possible for each of us, but- and we want to underline this – it can't be learned by rote or formula. In any art, individuals add their own twists. Plus, we like the idea of an art because its practice calls on not just one but many of our faculties.

Most important, an art can be learned. Being born with certain talents- manual dexterity, great vocal cords or perfect pitch, for example – is not enough. Artistry develops over time. And in art there is no end point to the learning. The same is true of a Living Democracy. It has no end. It is always in flux, fluid, in development.

We Learn by Doing. Like sports or the art of dance, we learn the arts of Living Democracy by *doing* them and by reflecting on our doing. Practicing the democratic arts means participating in democratic decision making and action.

After all, human beings are innately social creatures- meaning that we're obviously dependent on each other. But we're not born *effective* social creatures. While virtually all of us have the potential to listen, to communicate well, to envision a better society, to imagine ourselves in the shoes of others, to resolve conflict, and so forth, we do not all realize that potential. Realizing that potential requires deliberate learning.

But how? In this chapter we highlight just a few of the many capacities – the democratic arts – that we see regular people in all walks of life actively cultivating in order to make a difference.

In this chapter, we begin with the four arts that we often – though not exclusively – practice one on-one. In the next chapter we turn to group skills.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 1: Active Listening ■

encouraging the speaker and searching for meaning



Democratic Art One: Active Listening

Hallmarks

- ✓ Stays engaged
- ✓ Is supportive of the speakers' efforts whether or not there's agreement
- ✓ Searches for underlying meaning
- ✓ Is nonjudgemental

Benefits

- ✓ Uncovers deeper interests
- ✓ Permits the discovery of mutual interests
- ✓ Spurs creativity
- ✓ Changes the speaker as well as the listener
- ✓ Creates positive bonds

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Reach out for the ideas of others
- ✓ Sometimes, just be quiet
- ✓ Be encouraging and feed back what you hear
- ✓ Ask probing questions
- ✓ Take in more than the words
- ✓ Make the speaker comfortable

The first step in old-style politics or old-style management is drawing up one's manifesto, plan, or agenda and then selling it to others.

In contrast, the first art of Living Democracy is *simply listening*.

But is it really so simple? Listening and really hearing is an art that most of us must actively learn. It is the basis of any successful organization, whether it be a business, a community group, or even our family.

Active Listening Uncovers Mutual Interests. At its most complete, active listening suggests putting oneself in another's shoes, seeing the world- even if for just a fleeting moment- from their vantage point. This carries several benefits. First, we can then perceive another's interests fully. That's critical in finding the links to our own interests. And if both parties are to agree on action, common ground is key. COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service), a citizen organization in San Antonio, used active listening when reacting to its frustration at high unemployment rates among Hispanics. COPS members were upset because the city's biggest employers were bringing in outsiders to fill local jobs. COPS might have simply staged an angry protest. Instead, they invited corporate leaders to the table. COPS members *listened*. They listened to the concerns of those they might have seen only as adversaries. They listened to the companies' CEOs tell them of their own frustrations in not being able to find qualified employees locally. COPS members discovered a common interest with business leaders: improving the city's job training efforts. From there, COPS went on to develop an innovative redesign of the city's job training programs, which the city council passed unanimously.

How often have you been asked - by a colleague at work, your spouse, or even a canvasser at your doorstep - to sign on the somebody else's agenda before first being asked about your own concerns?

If you disagreed with their position, did you feel free to offer another view?
How did this approach make you feel?

Active Listening Spurs Creativity. Active listening spurs creativity because it opens us to new ways of seeing. That's why English professor Peter Elbow at the University of Massachusetts uses active listening as a teaching tool. He calls it "The Believing Game." Peter believes that our culture overemphasizes the importance of critical thinking, looking for flaws in any argument. The problem with using only this approach is that it can make even the best idea look bad. A creative idea with far-reaching advantages may be ignored because it contradicts conventional wisdom, or is poorly stated. To see its virtues, Peter argues, we must make a conscious, disciplined effort to *pretend* it is the best proposal, and then see what we notice.

What's required is a special kind of active listening – the temporary suspension of disbelief. We drop our tendency to first identify all the problems, freeing our creative input.

Peter uses this approach to enhance his teaching. But he encourages any group to try something similar.



The Believing Game

Play it when a proposal of idea gets roundly rejected before anyone has taken the time to explore it fully

Rules

1. Everyone tries as hard as possible to believe in the proposal, even briefly. As they listen nonjudgementally, they look for possible strengths only.
2. Participants offer only positive elaborations - ways to bolster the idea. No criticism!
3. Don't try to evaluate an idea until people have been able to bolster it with the believing game.

Sometimes you have to play the believing game with yourself on your own ideas.

Source: Adapted from Peter Elbow, "Methodical Belief," in *Embracing Contraries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and "Believing Game," appendix essay in *Writing Without Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). Used with permission.

Active Listening Changes the Speaker. In private life, when we go to a friend for advice and that friend simply listens, we're often amazed to discover it is we ourselves who have the answers. We've

had them all along. But formulating our ideas in order to make ourselves clear to someone else enables us to “see” those answers for the first time.

The same possibility exists in public life. In Northern California, for example, the Listening Project bases its community improvement work on hundreds of in-depth, one-on-one interviews with people in their homes. Instead of quick, check-off surveys, organizers ask open-ended questions about people’s values and concerns. In one home, a middle-aged white man complained that the biggest problem he saw was the noisy black teenagers who hung out on the streets and caused trouble.

On a simple survey, that one comment might have gotten him labeled as racist. But the organizers just listened. They didn’t argue. As the man talked, he began to reflect as well. By the end of the interview, he himself had restated – and re-understood – the problem in his neighborhood as a lack of decent recreational and job opportunities for young people.

So while we think of listening as passive, at best having some impact on the listener, this story suggests much more. The very act of being truly listened to can change the speaker’s own understanding.

Active Listening Creates Positive Bonds. Because being listened to is such a powerful experience – in all ways we just mentioned and more – it creates strong bonds among people. We describe a growing appreciation of the power of such bonds- relationships of trust – in public life. These relationships help sustain our commitment to tasks over time, and help us survive the disappointments that all rewarding effort entails.

Active Listening How-to’s

Here are some steps you can take to ensure that your listening becomes more active.

Reach out for the Ideas of Others. Americans often think that social change occurs when someone “who cares” comes up with a plan and then mobilizes others to make this change. But over and over again in our research we found that this is not what happens in the most effective organizations.

In Nashville, Tennessee, to give one example, a congregation-based effort, associated with the IAF, began with almost two years of listening. By this we mean the pastors and others (who were committed to working throughout the city to unite citizens across race and class lines) didn’t begin by mapping out the issues *they* cared about most. They began by simply listening to the concerns of their colleagues, parishioners, and neighbors, listening to understand why *others* might want to be part of such an effort. They expanded the listening process to include dozens of “house meetings” to listen to the concerns of diverse congregations and housing project residents among others. Out of this lengthy listening process TNT (Tying Nashvillians Together) was born.

Sometimes, Just Be Quiet. The most simple, and maybe most difficult how-to of active listening is how to keep quiet. Most of us want to be heard more than we want to listen. It feels like this is the only way to protect our interests. Actually, talking can undermine our interests, since our interests are often tied to the other person’s feeling positive and heard.



Seeing Yourself as an Active Listener

Think of three scenes - with your colleague at work, for example, or with your child, or with a friend - that are likely to occur within the next week in which you want to listen very, very well. Write them down.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Imagine yourself in each scene. What do you see yourself doing differently now in order to actively listen?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How will you know you've succeeded?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

So one skill in active listening is the habit of pausing after the other person speaks. Get comfortable with a little space there. The pause will allow you to be sure that the other person has finished. It will allow you to compose a more thoughtful question or a more balanced and calm response.

Be Encouraging and Feed Back What You Hear. Most of us have a hard time talking without an audience. If you as a listener want someone to talk demonstrate that you are taking it all in. Make eye contact. Lean toward the speaker, never away. Nod your encouragement. Add “uh-huh” or other encouraging expressions as often as is comfortable. And take the time to summarize what you’re hearing. Only then do your listeners know they’re being heard. Check in to see whether the speaker thinks you “got it.”

Ask Probing Questions. Juanita Mitchell of the Metropolitan Organization (TMO) in Houston stresses another aspect of active listening. It involves asking questions that encourage the speaker to reflect on his and her own words. “We help people go deeper,” Juanita told us. “We ask, what do you mean? What do you really mean? We get people to think about the words they use.”



How Well Do You Listen?

Are there people with whom you communicate - either in your private life or in your public life - whom you wish you understood better? In your most honest judgment, is something about your communication and listening perhaps partially responsible for the less than full understanding?

Do people sometimes tell you that you don't listen well enough, that you don't really hear them? Do you feel there's some merit to this complaint?

Are you conscious of what you actually do in conversations that encourages other people to communicate more or less fully? Please list here your principle listening behaviors (interrupting, using encouraging sounds and expressions, and so on).

Now you can do your own assessment of your listening skills. You've just searched your heart for instances in which you desire to listen better, for listening to problems others have brought to your attention, and for the level of your conscious awareness of listening skills in everyday life. What do your answers say to you about your listening skills

How good a listener are you? (1 = poor; 5 = excellent.)

1 2 3 4 5

How comfortable do other people feel talking to you?
(1 = not at all comfortable; 5 = very comfortable.)

1 2 3 4 5

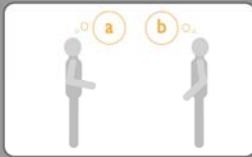
What is your diagnosis of the skill development (if any) you need?

Take in More Than the Words. Disciplining oneself to talk less and pause more allows you to become a better observer. Communication is about a lot more than the words spoken, as we all know. The speaker's facial expression, tone of voice, and body language (positioning and movement) all communicate feelings that we can take it in. We're not suggesting that it is always possible to read these expressions accurately, but we can register them and weigh them in light of everything else we know about the speaker.

Make Sure the Speaker is Comfortable. Joe Szakos is a low-key, highly effective citizen organizer with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC). He told us: "If you want people to talk, you can't just invite them to a meeting to discuss an issue you think is important." Then he emphasized to us: "You have to go sit on their porch. You have to sit with them and drink coffee, not worrying about

what the agenda is. What they care most about may not even come up on the first sit.” In other words, it’s important to go to a place where people feel most at ease and aware of their feelings.

At home or on the job, effective listeners go to where people feel most comfortable, and they take in more than the words. Effective listeners reach out to the ideas of others; they ask probing questions and feed back what they hear. And sometimes they’re just quiet.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 2: Creative Conflict ■

confronting others in ways that produce growth



Democratic Art Two: Creative Conflict

Hallmark

- ✓ Constructive, honest confrontation

Benefits

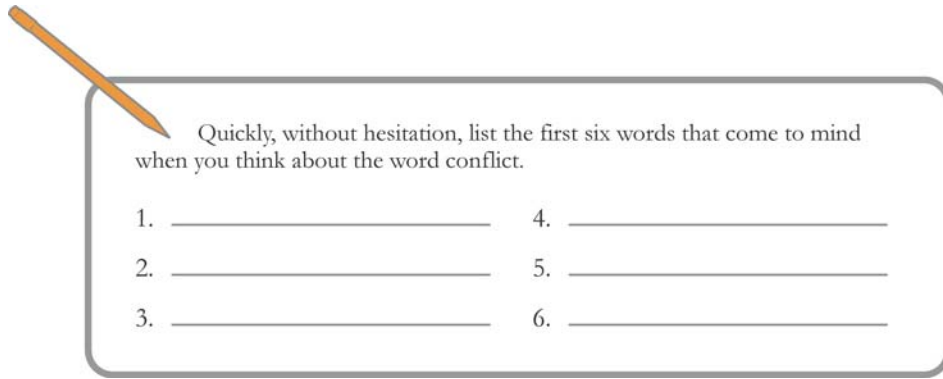
- ✓ Demonstrates that diverse stakeholders are involved.
- ✓ Uncovers interests.
- ✓ Can deepen understanding
- ✓ Generates more options
- ✓ Can build group confidence

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Value and incorporate diversity
- ✓ Create an environment "safe" for difference
- ✓ Leave labels at the door
- ✓ Agree to disagree when there's no common ground
- ✓ Focus on the present and on solutions
- ✓ Allow some "venting" but limit reactions
- ✓ Use self-discipline in expressions of anger
- ✓ Be well prepared
- ✓ Make no permanent enemies.
- ✓ Model the "surfacing" of conflict.

"To live is to have conflict," a leader in Allied Communities of Tarrant (ACT) told us when we visited him in Fort Worth. "If you don't have problems, you're not doing anything. This is what we're teaching our children. Friction means fire – and fire means power."

Is his view typical? Hardly. Most Americans abhor conflict. Whether in politics or at work, school, or home, most of us learn to see conflict as negative – as something to avoid. Typically, an employer promotes a subordinate for being "a good team player" who "doesn't make waves." A principal believes his good teachers are those who maintain orderly classrooms without noise and – above all – without conflict. A parent praises his teenager for being "a good kid" who "never gives me problems." Entire minority communities are cursed or praised according to whether they "cause trouble," or are seen as "peaceful, good fold."



Quickly, without hesitation, list the first six words that come to mind when you think about the word conflict.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

When we ask Americans what comes to mind when they hear the word conflict, we receive answers like “tension”, “power grabs”, “nastiness,” “fights,” “win-lose,” “war,” and “anger.” This limited perspective understandably leads to a version of the “fight or flight” response: either avoid conflict or be prepared to “duke it out.”

There is hope, however, in this limited picture. Millions of Americans, including many of those introduced in this book, are acknowledging that neither fight nor flight is a very successful strategy.

Instead, many people are experimenting with techniques for negotiating conflict constructively, as books like “Getting to Yes” soar to the top of the bestseller list. But before we Americans make the effort to learn new skills, we have to uproot our own prejudices, fully grasping the *positive* functions of conflict.

Conflict Demonstrates that Diverse Stakeholders Are Involved. If there’s no conflict, it might just mean that important perspectives have been excluded from the decision-making table.

Conflict Can Uncover Interests. Conflict can shake us out of our narrowly defined interest, as we see the consequences of our views through the eyes of those who disagree.

Conflict Can Deepen Our Understanding of a Problem. Considering several definitions of a problem and the consequences of different solutions – helps sharpen our understanding of even the most complex issues.

Conflict Can Provide More Options for Action. Conflict avoids one of the most common mistakes in problem solving – leaping to a premature commitment to one solution. Conflict gives us more choices.

Conflict Can Be About Learning Instead of “Winning or Losing.” Every difference, discomfort, or disagreement can be used to better know ourselves and others. Conflict provides clues to prejudices, needs, values, and goals – all information we need to successfully interact with others.

Conflict Can Build Group Confidence. Groups that successfully use conflict for learning come to believe in themselves more strongly. With confidence in their ability to use conflict well, they can take more risks. Healthy conflict can get us more engaged in the problem solving process – deepening our sense of ownership, both of the process, and, eventually, the solution. As Belle Zars, a member of a social justice group in West Virginia, told us: “It’s good to know that any time you get change you get

conflict.” Further, adds Belle, “I’ve learned that any time we have a good rip-roaring fight, the quality of our decisions is much better. Heat isn’t necessarily bad.”

Conflict will not go away. Yet, think how much energy and time we waste trying to avoid it or engaging it in destructive battles. Simply perceiving conflict as both inevitable and useful—even essential— to healthy public discussion is the first step in turning it from a curse to a creative tool.

How do we create positive conflict, conflict with all its potential benefits?

Creative Conflict How-To’s

Here are some pointers to help you accept and embrace conflict as a healthy part of public interaction. First, positive conflict requires that we welcome diversity, in all its forms.

Value and Incorporate Diversity. In the last few decades, nothing could be more PC—politically correct—than to swear allegiance to the principle of diversity. It’s one of the biggest “shoulds” of our time. Living Democracy, however, approaches diversity from another angle: diversity can produce better results. If it helps spur creative conflict, diversity contributes all of the benefits we just listed. From more perspectives come more understanding, more creativity, and more commitment to implementation.



How Well Do You Handle Conflict?

Rate your ability to handle conflict by circling a number from one to five.

Poorly - I get very
upset; I run from
conflict; I blow up.

Very well - I can
use conflict
constructively

1

2

3

4

5

Most of us can easily think of conflicts in our lives, even in the last week or two. Think of three conflictual situations that have occurred in your life recently:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Did any of these conflicts bring benefits? What were they?

Could they have been more beneficial? More creative? How?

For each of these situations, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

So appreciating diversity is not a moralistic “should.” It creates better solutions. That’s Ken Galdston’s experience. Ken works with the Merrimack Valley Project in Massachusetts, which includes both unions and churches, each with very different styles of action.

I see the way the church people challenge the union people and vice versa. That’s good. An example is when two companies announced they were closing. Hundreds of jobs were at stake. This brought church, union, and chamber of commerce people together.

Once it was clear that the plant closures couldn’t be reversed, we decided to ask for job-retraining money from the companies. The union people were ready to write it off. They didn’t trust the companies. They wanted to jump

on the companies for bad faith. But the church people were inclined to give the companies a timetable and to just see how it went. They said, 'We can be more principled.' If we'd just taken this go-slow approach or just had the jump-the-gun approach, it wouldn't have worked. In the end, the combination worked. We got \$55,000 from the company for retraining 140 workers, and that leveraged other funds.

Jean True of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth put this lesson quite simply: "The best decisions are those made with the most input by the most people."

Create an Environment "Safe" for Difference. Making conflict constructive begins by creating environments in which people feel free to dissent, to offer opposing views. Conflict by which we grow is "open, public, and often very noisy," writes educational philosopher Parker Palmer. What blocks such creative conflict is fear, he says. "It is fear of exposure, of appearing ignorant, of being ridiculed." People feel safe to expose their ignorance only when we work to communicate that "every attempt at truth, no matter how off the mark," contributes to the search.

Recently we heard about a marvelously successful high school history teacher, very popular with his students. "That's a brilliant wrong answer!" he's been known to say to a student who ventured beyond his or her own sure knowledge. This teacher was creating a public environment free from fear of embarrassment. He was preparing young people who will be able to deal with differences without fear that being wrong will bring humiliation.

Even about what appears to be a no-compromise issue—abortion—some advocates on both sides have tired of battling. They've worked hard to create an environment safe for differences.

Beginning in 1991, abortion rights advocates and those opposed in Milwaukee came together in what turned into half- or even full-day meetings every four to six weeks. Initially, what made the meetings possible were commitments to keep the encounters safe. Everyone agreed: no media coverage, and "the only agenda would be to have a dialogue," Maggi Cage, one of the conveners, told us.

Agree to Leave Labels at the Door. Participants in the abortion discussion arrived at certain rules to foster active listening. For one, they agreed to ban the use of clichés, labels, and rhetoric. Without the distraction of defending themselves against each other's labels, they could see beneath differences to discover that they all, as Maggi explained, do have a shared interest. It's a "common desire to prevent unwanted pregnancies." Stereotypes broke down; trust grew. Out of this dialogue came ideas for "sexuality education" for youth, which the group later presented to legislators.

Agree to Disagree, Then Explore Common Ground. In St. Louis, representatives from the two abortion camps took a very different approach. While the Milwaukee participants believed it was important to really listen to each others' views on abortion before finding common ground, in St. Louis they "decided to table the abortion issue and talk about everything else in between," said Jean Cavender of Reproductive Health Services. Since most of the participants were providers of services to women and children, they found that "everything else in between" covered quite a lot of ground—including common ground.

So even in the most divisive battles, participants can deliberately create conditions allowing all sides to discover their shared interests. The idea is catching on in the abortion debate; such groups are now forming in several other cities.

Keep the Focus on the Present—and on Solutions. In Berkeley, California, a zoning plan had been stalled for years. Labor union members and other workers wanted zoning in order to keep high-paying manufacturing jobs. But environmentalists and some residents applauded the exit of polluting industries. How could such opposing interests ever converge?

Planning Commission member Babette Jee agreed to chair a subcommittee on the West Berkeley Plan, but only with the understanding that she would bring every interested party to the table. And she did, in a series of face-to-face meetings that continued over many months.

“At first the meetings were a little tense,” she told us, “because people were complaining about the past.... So we made people talk about the present and a little about the future. We would focus not just on the rhetorical or political point of view, but a real situation: ‘practically speaking, how do we deal with this problem?’”

Discipline Expressions of Anger. Meeting facilitators encouraged participants in the West Berkeley Plan to get their competing feelings out on the table but to resist reacting to inflammatory statements or “under your- breath” jabs. They encouraged people not to interrupt each other and to reflect back on a speaker’s interests before stating competing interests. After a while, participants realized that they didn’t need to be abrasive to be heard.

The process generated a plan that none had started with but that held to the highest environmental standards while still protecting good jobs. By the end, “Almost anyone in the group could articulate the other’s side,” Babette Jee marveled. When it came time for the city council to vote on the plan, thirty or forty citizens testified—all in favor. “Speaker after speaker got up, basically supporting the proposition, not because it was exactly what they wanted, but because it supports the entire group of people,” said one of the participants.

The outcome of this creative conflict surprised even the participants. They learned that creative conflict requires disciplining anger if we hope to be effective.

Undisciplined anger can cause others to shut down: their fear response renders them unable to perceive the reasons for the anger. So its intent backfires. Rather than the hoped-for change, undisciplined anger provokes greater resistance to change.

After much work before the 1991 election, Shelby County Interfaith in Memphis had finally gotten a meeting with the mayor. Hear Gerald Taylor tell it: “In the middle of the mayor’s remarks, some of our members snickered. This offense gave the mayor an excuse to try to end the meeting. A small-scale confrontation blew up into a large one. And it took us some time to get back on track toward our goals.

“In the evaluation we did after the meeting, everyone in the group agreed: the snickering gave the mayor an opening to deflect the meeting from our agenda. We still ended the meeting better positioned than when we began, but we all learned from that.”

Here, the group’s internal evaluation session encouraged SCI members to reinforce their commitment to disciplining their expression of anger.

And there’s another drawback in undisciplined anger: It often strikes the wrong target.

An Easy Question...

Can you think of two or three times recently when you have felt anger?
Write them down.

And a Tougher Question...

If you're not satisfied with how you handled your anger, what would your improved behavior have looked like?

Take, for instance, the temptation to rail against a government or corporate official about something his or her bureaucracy is doing. If you make the person feel personally blamed, you may have alienated a potential ally. Citizens in Seattle, upset about a development proposed for a wooded ravine in their neighborhood, invited a city planner to a block meeting. These neighbors decided not to attack the planner for the city's role, but to listen instead. They read between the lines of her remarks and discovered that she was actually sympathetic to their cause. They built on that relationship and ultimately triumphed. Disciplining anger is critical to constructive confrontation.

Be Well Prepared. Jean True of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth described why discipline is so important in, say, testifying before the legislature or state agencies: "They'll bait you. They'll try to get you mad. Then they'll turn around and make you look like a fool. They'll say, 'oh, she's not rational. She's too emotional. We can't invite her to meetings.' They also tend to pick on certain people they know are more vulnerable."

That's why, Jean told us, the training KFTC provides is so important. It prepares people to keep calm, to not react to baiting, to prepare themselves mentally beforehand.

Make No Permanent Enemies. Many of the most effective citizens we've met have learned that in public life it doesn't pay to create permanent foes, whether in the workplace, school, or citizens' organization. Someone who opposes you on one issue might become your greatest asset on the next.

Model the "Surfacing" of Conflict. No group can deal creatively with conflict if its participants refuse to acknowledge it. So Rick Surpin, co-founder of the Bronx worker-owned home care service, works to model the "surfacing of conflict, so that the group can deal with it." And Rick describes the payoff: "If body language shows something different than what people are saying, I used to have to make sure that the real feeling came out. Now, others are starting to do it. People will put out more of what they're thinking. Some number of people will—even if only a few. This creates space for a broader middle to speak. It starts the ball rolling. It was like pulling teeth in the beginning. Now that isn't necessary."

Using Creative Conflict in Your Life

Which one of the how-to's of creative conflict do you most need to practice during the coming week?

Now, develop a plan of action: what *specifically* are you going to do in order to practice creative conflict during the next week?

What benefits do you expect? How will you know if you've succeeded (or at least made progress)?

Rick was pleased at that. "A belief that conflict should be out on the table is part of our culture now," Rick told us.

Too often in public life, as well as in private, people in conflict feel reluctant to confront each other directly. They may fear embarrassment. They may fear the other person's anger. They may fear they won't be heard, or treated fairly. So they tell everyone else about their conflict. Or those in conflict simply lock horns. They attack. And their anger and fear of not being heard makes them unable to listen. In either mode, there's little hope for positively resolving conflict. Mediation may be needed.



Doing Democracy

Art 3: Mediation

facilitating interaction to help people in conflict hear each other



Democratic Art Three: Mediation

Hallmark

- ✓ A skilled, neutral listener helps those in conflict "hear" each other

Benefits

- ✓ Avoids destructive conflict
- ✓ Makes problem solving more possible
- ✓ Reduces the likelihood of unproductive conflict in the future
- ✓ Enhances personal dignity and mutual respect

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Someone who's neutral - the mediator - invites those in conflict to state their views.
- ✓ The mediator listens in order to bring differences to the surface.
- ✓ The mediator doesn't judge, but asks questions to uncover common interests.
- ✓ The mediator stresses points in common that the disputants may not see.
- ✓ Disputants search for a solution that meets some interests of both parties

Mediation is a fancy word for a simple process—a neutral listener plays a facilitating role. Its power lies in people feeling they've had a chance to express themselves fully in a safe context. Feeling heard, in and of itself, often reduces the intensity of people's anger. It taps many of the benefits of active listening, including hearing oneself perhaps for the first time. New options can emerge.

Mediation How-To's

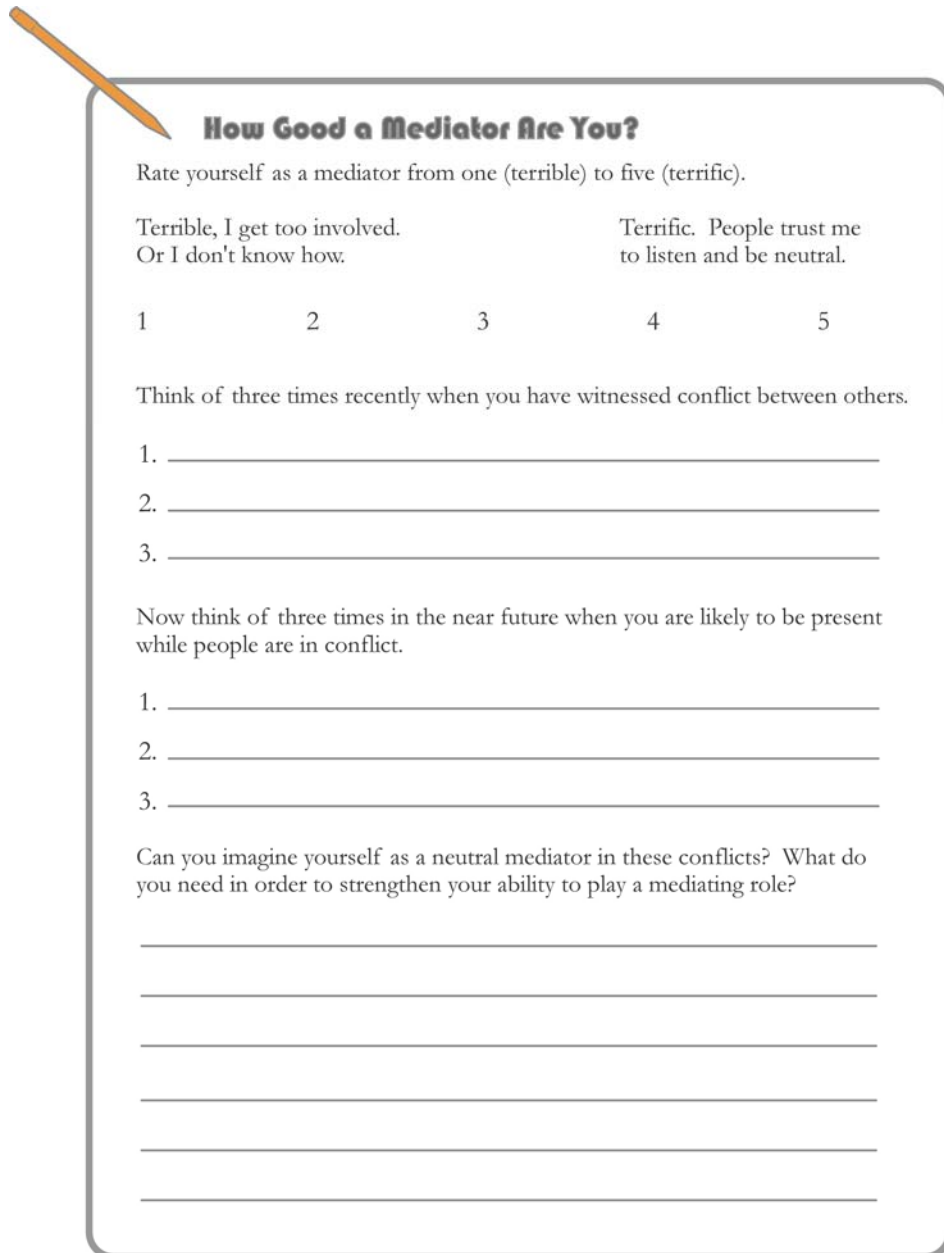
For this art of democracy we've woven the how-to's into two stories about Americans learning mediation skills. Do these stories suggest ways mediation could improve problem solving in your workplace, organization, school, or family?

San Francisco's Community Boards Resolve Conflicts. In 1976, in a racially mixed, working-class neighborhood in San Francisco, several residents decided that many problems creating stress and bad blood couldn't be addressed simply by calling in the police. In fact, bringing in the police was deepening the antagonism.

These citizens looked for a better way to resolve conflict, be it barking dogs, vandalism, petty theft, fender-benders, lousy service, whatever. Volunteers set out to train residents to mediate conflicts among neighbors. And the Community Board Program was born with this motto: "Neighbors helping neighbors resolve conflicts that keep us apart."

Today, the Community Boards' full-time staff trains and oversees the work of three hundred volunteer conciliators, ranging in age from fourteen to seventy. Over a third are people of color. Its volunteer mediators handle and settle more cases in San Francisco than the municipal court.

"I think it's not so much that these programs do problem resolution, but they allow for problem reformation," explained Terry Amsler, who heads the Community Boards. "They help people get off their stuckness, off the conflict, into 'what are the bigger positives we can shoot for by doing it together?' . . . It's not how we resolve the problem, it's how do we talk enough to establish a relationship."



How Good a Mediator Are You?

Rate yourself as a mediator from one (terrible) to five (terrific).

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Terrible, I get too involved. Or I don't know how. | | Terrific. People trust me to listen and be neutral. | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Think of three times recently when you have witnessed conflict between others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now think of three times in the near future when you are likely to be present while people are in conflict.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Can you imagine yourself as a neutral mediator in these conflicts? What do you need in order to strengthen your ability to play a mediating role?

Terry explained the four steps in mediation that allow this problem-reformation:

Disputants introduce themselves and tell their stories to the mediation panel. The sense of being heard “brings out the best in people,” reports staff person Rita Adrian. “It’s the fact that people who, not getting paid, give so much sympathetic attention to them...and take everything they say so seriously. That’s incredibly disarming,” she says.


The mediation panel responds. The panel then praises the disputants for being willing to conciliate. It summarizes the nature of the dispute and stresses the common points of agreement, which often the disputants have not noticed.

Disputants turn their chairs and talk directly to each other, while the mediation panel listens attentively. Sometimes the mediators might intervene to say: “Please repeat back what you heard the other person say.” But the main goal is to give people the time just to talk to each other, Terry told us, so they begin to break down “the evil, mean monster” picture they’ve created of each other.

The disputants and the mediation panel then talk together to come up with “win-win” solutions. The point, says Terry, is to “satisfy to some degree the self-interest—if not all the issues—of the parties.”

The resolution arrived at then gets committed to paper and all parties sign what is a moral, though not legally binding, agreement. In a few weeks, Community Boards follow up to see how things are going and to offer any additional assistance if necessary.

Eighty percent of the time, neighborhood mediations resolve problems to the satisfaction of all parties. Considering that a third of the cases involve violence or threats of violence, Terry says he’s pleased.



Analyzing Disputes and Your Role in Them

Think of the three disputes you listed earlier that you have observed in the recent past.. Could a mediator have helped?

In each case, who might have served as a mediator? Where would the best mediation have occurred? When? How?

Answers to these questions - who, where, when, and how - add up to your analysis of what mediation might offer in each of these conflicts.

Now what about your role in mediation? What could you have done to facilitate the reaching of a constructive agreement?

The impact of Community Boards goes far beyond the prevention of violence and neighborhood tension. The volunteer mediators—one-third of whom first became involved as disputants themselves—learn skills that enrich the community. “Volunteers from Community Boards

marshal parade routes and facilitate community meetings,” Terry observes. “[They are] a resource to the community in many ways.”

Students Learn Mediation Skills and Reduce Violence. In the early 1980s, San Francisco’s Community Boards became one of the trailblazers in the movement to teach dispute resolution and to train children to mediate conflict among their peers. Since then, a half-dozen other centers around the country have also developed training programs in positive conflict resolution for school children. Most require that the young, would-be mediators receive ten to fifteen hours of training in how to resolve the disputes they see developing among other kids.

Now, from Sacramento to Iowa and New York, some two thousand schools are involved. In the Community Boards’ approach, the young disputants must agree to four key rules: (1) agree to solve the problem; (2) tell the truth; (3) don’t interrupt; and (4) no name-calling. New York’s Board of Education, jointly with the organization Educators for Social Responsibility, launched the Resolving Conflict Creatively program in 1985. It now involves forty thousand students in over one hundred schools. At P.S. 321, for example, fourth and fifth graders elect students who receive special training to negotiate their classmates’ disputes. Sporting special T-shirts and working in pairs, the youngsters patrol the playground and lunchroom. If they see fighting or arguing, they ask, “Can we help?” If the disputants agree to mediation, they follow steps similar to the four that San Francisco’s Community Board Program uses.

The results are striking: young mediators have dramatically decreased the discipline problems in their schools. At a middle school in Tucson, Arizona, for example, peer mediation cut the number of physical fights by half in just three months.

These two developments—one community based, one school based—provide guidelines for successful mediation. They suggest that mediation could become part of our public culture, and aid our private lives as well.



Doing Democracy

Art 4: Negotiation

problem solving that meets some key interests of all involved



Democratic Art Four: Negotiation

Hallmark

- ✓ Problem solving that meets some key needs of each party.

Benefits

- ✓ Makes resolution more possible
- ✓ Maintains the dignity of all parties
- ✓ Makes it more likely that agreements will be upheld
- ✓ Prepares the ground for future problem solving.

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Know your interests so well, you know what you can compromise.
- ✓ Focus on crucial interest; don't get bogged down in debate over means.
- ✓ Search for common interests; work to narrow differences.
- ✓ Maintain respectful communication - it's in your interest.
- ✓ Take the pressure off and keep talking.

Every day, we're involved in negotiation, whether it's with our spouse about who will do the grocery shopping, with a colleague about how to share tasks, as part of a parents' group dealing with a rigid school principal, or as part of a citizens' organization getting banks to invest in our neighborhood. If we negotiate well, we ensure that agreements will be honored and that they meet some needs of everybody involved. Plus, we can feel confident we're preparing the ground for resolving any future problems.

Negotiation How-To's

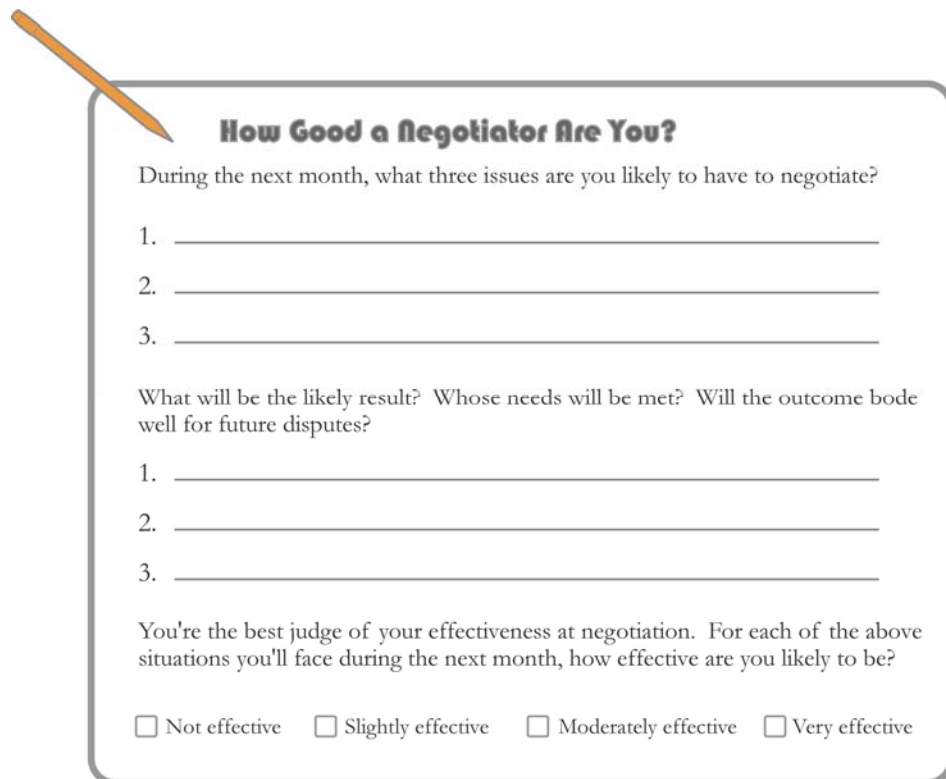
To achieve these benefits, what does effective negotiation require? It requires all the other arts we've mentioned, such as active listening and constructive conflict, and more.

Know Your Interests Well. One obstacle to effective negotiation is a fear of compromise (fear of being "had"). To overcome it, we must reflect ahead of time. If we're clear on our real interests, we know what we can compromise without sacrificing that interest.

Consider a citizens' organization asking for the school board's commitment to an annual communitywide survey evaluating the school's performance—a "community report card." Before

meeting with the board, members decide they would be willing to compromise on when the survey would first be introduced and whether the school would allocate funds for mailing it. But, members agree, the community-wide school evaluation itself is not negotiable.

Focus on Interests, Not the Means to Achieve Them. A related danger is getting sidetracked in disputes about the ways to achieve a goal, instead of remaining focused on the goal itself. In this case, the citizens know that their goal is a genuine evaluation process in which all citizens could participate. They remain open to suggestions about how that evaluation might best be done.



How Good a Negotiator Are You?

During the next month, what three issues are you likely to have to negotiate?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What will be the likely result? Whose needs will be met? Will the outcome bode well for future disputes?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

You're the best judge of your effectiveness at negotiation. For each of the above situations you'll face during the next month, how effective are you likely to be?

☐ Not effective ☐ Slightly effective ☐ Moderately effective ☐ Very effective

Search for Common Interests; Work to Narrow Differences. In the school-evaluation example, the citizens' group can ask itself, what might be the school board's interest in annual school evaluations by the community? The citizens would look for ways to demonstrate the value to the board—such as a higher profile for the school, identification of problems before they become intractable, a greater sense of ownership by the community.

Maintain Respectful Communication—It's in Your Interest. Sometimes you can't achieve what you most want. But if you've maintained respectful give-and-take, you leave the door open for identifying a different, more feasible objective. When the Merrimack Valley Project in Massachusetts realized it couldn't save the jobs it wanted, for example, members and staff were able to negotiate funds for retraining because they had maintained good communication with the company throughout the negotiation.

Take the Pressure Off and Keep Talking. A dramatic labor dispute offers another lesson about effective negotiation. In April 1989, seventeen hundred members of the United Mine Workers of America struck the Pittston Coal Group. The ensuing struggle was bitter: it lasted nine months and

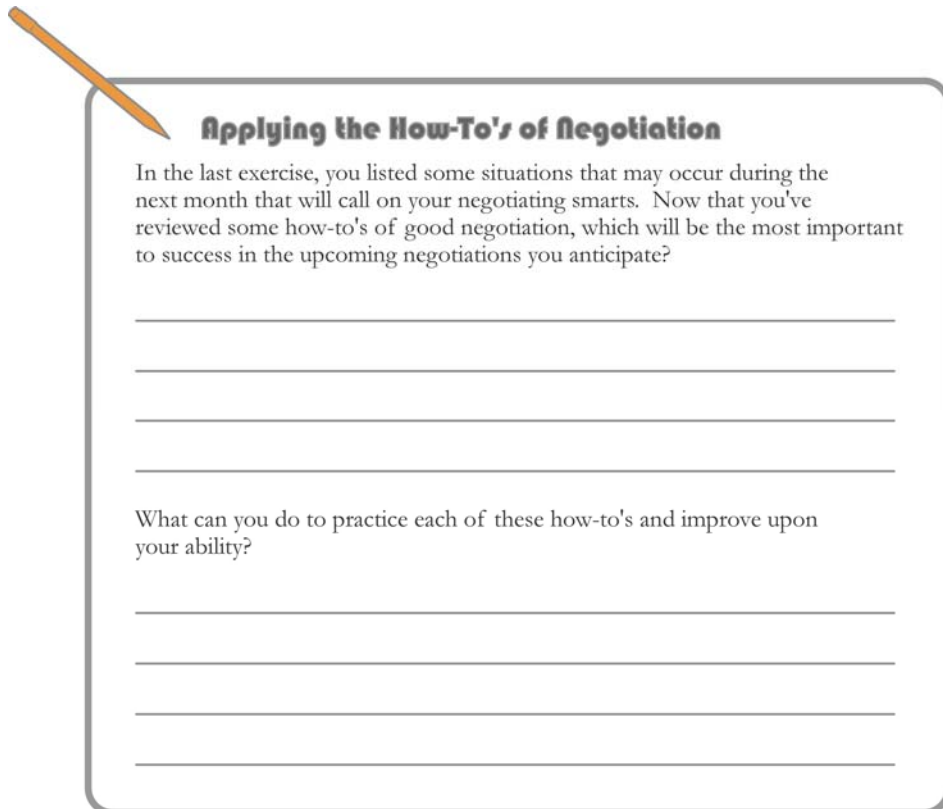
involved sympathy strikes reaching ten other states and affecting forty-six thousand additional workers.

Finally, the secretary of labor appointed long-time mediator Bill Usery. Bill pledged to bring Pittston's CEO and the union president face to face. But his approach was not typical of adversarial, labor management wrangles. When asked how he managed to arrive at a "win-win" contract, he explained that it was by breaking out of the formal negotiation process: "For seven days and into the nights, I kept them [labor and management] talking to each other, not even asking them to make a proposal. We talked about concepts. How would they see the best relationship working? How could they best achieve the productivity they wanted?...For seven days—for ten to fifteen hours at a time—we just kept them talking to each other, and relaxing, and hearing one another and understanding one another. Then we broke for two days, and we came back....We tried to back away, to look at it anew with a better understanding of one another."

This process of just talking, without pressure to take positions, broke through feelings that Bill described as "total mistrust" and "animosity" between the two sides. Bill kept both sides talking, but in such a way that they didn't fear that a mistaken remark could kill them. The process led to a settlement both sides could accept.

So the next time you lock horns with someone, take a tip from the mine workers: call a moratorium for a few days. Just be together without trying to find out the answer. See whether a resolution comes more easily when you resume.

Before going on, you might wish to pause here and review the four democratic arts introduced in this chapter.



Applying the How-To's of Negotiation

In the last exercise, you listed some situations that may occur during the next month that will call on your negotiating smarts. Now that you've reviewed some how-to's of good negotiation, which will be the most important to success in the upcoming negotiations you anticipate?

What can you do to practice each of these how-to's and improve upon your ability?

CHAPTER TWO

Mastering the Arts of Living Democracy: Group Skills

Next we turn to those Arts of Democracy that we practice more frequently in group settings. But for many of us, the very thought of group settings is off-putting. We have sat – bored and frustrated – through too many bad meetings. If Living Democracy means more meetings, you maybe thinking, then it's not for me!

But perhaps the problem is not with bad meetings but with meeting badly. In our research for this book, we have observed meetings that left participants feeling energized, not depleted. People walked out with a sense of solid accomplishment. They'd even had fun. Such meetings almost never happen spontaneously. But learning how to create them isn't difficult, even though as youngsters few of us ever had the chance to learn.

Now to the six arts of democracy that can vastly enrich our satisfaction in any group endeavor.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 5: Political Imagination ■

confronting others in ways that produce growth



Democratic Art Five: Political Imagination

Hallmark

- ✓ Reimagining current reality to more nearly match our values and needs

Benefits

- ✓ Spurs Creativity
- ✓ Motivates action
- ✓ Releases and focuses positive energy
- ✓ Enables goal setting

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Contrast the world as it is, with the world as you wish it to be. Be concrete
- ✓ Learn to hold both images in your consciousness at once - to avoid either cynicism or naiveté.
- ✓ Try cultural expressions such as art


When today's world can look so grim, when all the evils of our time—poverty, violence, and environmental decay—are worsening, how is it possible to envision positive alternatives?

Yet, without an image of where we want to go, we're not likely to get there. Thus political imagination is a primary art of Living Democracy. It's the ability to suspend the givens of today's social and political order in order to envision new possibilities. It's the capacity to reimage the world. Political imagination is what philosopher Peter Kropotkin was getting at in his advice to students in the last century: "Think about the kind of world you want to live and work in. What do you need to build that world? Demand that your teachers teach you that."

Political Imagination How-To's

Here are some guidelines to assist you in imagining the world you can help to build.

Contrast the World as It Is with the World as You Wish It to Be. From business groups to community based organizations, people are experimenting with exercises in political imagination. Training and workshop facilitators ask participants to describe the world—or community, or workplace—in which they



Reimagining Your Community

Without reading about how others have responded, please list the first five to ten values you want to see in your community

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now list the actual values you see expressed by and in your community.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

wish to live. Such exercises can be much more than wishful thinking when they remind participants that the world is not static; it is remade daily by our choices.

Learn to Hold Both Images in Your Consciousness at Once. The exercise opens a discussion of the contrast between the world as it is and the world as we wish it to be. Living in the tension between the two—avoiding both cynicism and naiveté—is what makes people effective in public life. In the citizen training offered by the Industrial Areas Foundation, learning to hold both realities in us at once is an important theme.

Try Cultural Expressions Such as Art. Art is a powerful vehicle for sparking political imagination. In the northern California community of Ukiah, residents temporarily transformed their city hall into a gallery. People of all ages were asked to offer their visual images of what they want their community to look like a decade hence. The result: a map of the future with a sense of differences and shared values. A similar process has been repeated in hundreds of towns and cities across America.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 6: Public Dialogue ■

public talk on matters that concern us all



Democratic Art Six: Public Dialogue

Hallmark

- ✓ Public talk on matters that affect all of us
- ✓ Talk in which differences are valued.

Benefits

- ✓ Reveals interests
- ✓ Expands and deepens knowledge
- ✓ Generates more creative alternatives

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Use face-to-face discussion
- ✓ Use a neutral facilitator, where feasible
- ✓ Use resource materials with diverse perspectives.
- ✓ Probe beneath positions to explore values.
- ✓ Sometimes start small; let trust build gradually.

Once we understand where we wish to go, Living Democracy involves us with others whose visions are not the same as ours. Dialogue is then required.

What we call public dialogue our friend and political philosopher, Benjamin Barber, calls “public talk.” “It is not about the world; it is talk that makes and remakes the world,” he writes. Public dialogue is how citizens learn to incorporate varied interests and come to public judgment. At its fullest, it means creating an ongoing conversation about public matters in which differences are valued because they help us explore underlying assumptions and new sources of information.

In stark contrast, today’s public talk is dominated by media broadcasts in which even the sound bites are shrinking. Political campaigns have become more fundraising machines than forums for face-to-face discussion. And Annie’s small-town café—serving up community gab along with hot coffee—has been replaced by Dunkin Donuts and suburban sprawl.



Igniting an Envisioning Process

To think about the value of an envisioning process for your community, workplace, or school, make believe you are preparing a fifteen minute talk on the importance of political imagination to help create positive change. What will you tell your audience?

Now imagine a process to help your fellow citizens create a community that more nearly matches their values. Who should be involved? How might they become more involved? What would be necessary to make people feel their views will be heard? What role might community and religious leaders and organizations play? And what result would you find most satisfying?

Where and how do we engage in public dialogue? Some Americans are coming up with innovative answers, from issue-focused talk shows to community problem-solving meetings.

In our chapter on making the media our voice, we cited El Paso's televised issue discussions. Ismael Legarreta, an engineer for a steel company, was one of many who discovered that these discussions met a real need for people who rarely had opportunities to talk about important concerns.


Public Dialogue How-To's

Here are ways some everyday citizens have initiated public dialogue.

Use Face-to-Face Discussion. "When we looked around, we saw there were plenty of places to go to fight with each other. What we wanted to do was just talk to each other," said Glenn Gross of the Connecticut Environment Round Table. So Glenn and his colleagues created a "study circle" on environmental issues. "Our real goal is not just to talk to each other, but to get other people out in the world talking to each other."

Study circles that Glenn mentioned are hardly new. The term is borrowed from Sweden, where study circles are a way of life: today over three hundred thousand study circles meet in that small country. Today, Americans, too—in workplaces, union halls, schools, communities, and places of worship—are experimenting with these loosely structured discussion groups.

Use a Neutral Facilitator and Use Resource Materials with Diverse Perspectives. In one type of study group, diverse participants read a common set of background materials, offering a variety of perspectives on one issue. Then they come together with a neutral facilitator to share their reactions and "to work through" their differences. They often gain a deeper understanding and, in some cases, a course of action.



Thinking About Your Public Dialogue

Think back to the last time you had an in-depth conversation about a matter of public importance. Jot down responses to the following questions

How did it feel? _____

Was there sufficient give-and-take? _____

Did anyone's views change or develop? _____

Did participants gain from the experience? _____

If you're missing real public talk in your life, what is one opportunity open to you now to really engage in conversation and learn from others?

In Maine, Sarah Campbell is communications director of that state's Council of Churches. During the Gulf War, the council agonized over an appropriate response. Since its member organizations held "varying points of view," wrote Sarah, "a public position on the war was out of the question." Instead, we defined our role as facilitator and educator, she explained. The council used the Study Circle Resource Center's booklet *Crisis in the Gulf* to initiate discussion groups.

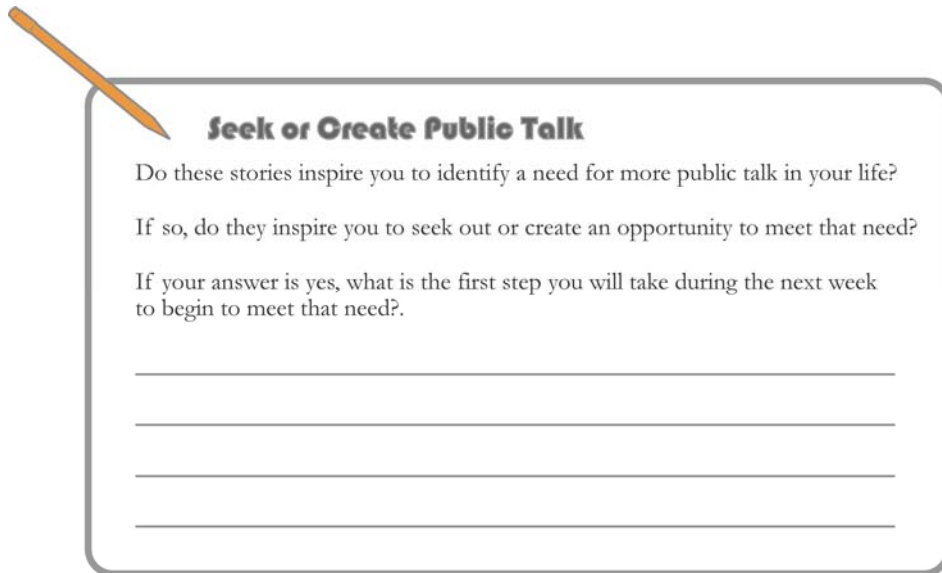
Probe Beneath Positions to Explore Values. In El Paso, Ismael Legarreta explained to us how being involved in discussion groups changed his way of relating to people: "You start looking at what people are. People say things, and even though they might not make sense, you start learning why they're saying them, where they came from, what their environment was, how they grew up. And you're not judging. What you're trying to do is find out what makes them say the things they say."

Sometimes Start Small; Let Trust Build Gradually. Dan Kemmis is the mayor of Missoula, Montana. He had long been frustrated by the divisiveness of Missoula's political culture. In the 1980s Dan and the head of the chamber of commerce took a bold step: each agreed to invite two other people to talk about how to do things differently.

Eventually their group grew to twenty-four, with members hand-picked to represent both sides of the ideological fence. It called itself the Missoula Roundtable. To join the group, each person had to agree to honor one basic covenant: "Although they would disagree about much, the goal was a better way of doing public business, a better way of listening to each other, and to say things so they could be heard," Dan told us. "It was hard. It took time."

Confidence grew slowly. But eventually, group members moved past their differences and took on a major issue together. The issue, a proposal to build a ski resort, "had all the elements that normally would have guaranteed years of divisiveness," said Dan. Instead, the Roundtable asked

citizens to come and talk to them from both sides of the issue. They asked that everyone approach the issue in a way that “does the least harm to the community.”



Seek or Create Public Talk

Do these stories inspire you to identify a need for more public talk in your life?

If so, do they inspire you to seek out or create an opportunity to meet that need?

If your answer is yes, what is the first step you will take during the next week to begin to meet that need?

The two sides agreed that there must at least be a way to collect the data in a less adversarial way. So instead of having two sides amassing contradictory data, they made one effort. In the end, the data itself settled the issue.

The Roundtable languished when Dan ran for mayor against the chamber of commerce director. But when Dan became mayor he reconvened it as the Mayor’s Roundtable. He’s tried to balance the group by gender and income, as well as by ideology. “It’s invaluable,” he says enthusiastically. “I can bring big and divisive issues to the Roundtable and people must think about what’s good for Missoula, as well as their own positions.”



Doing Democracy

■ Art 7: Public Judgement ■

public decision making that allows citizens to make choices they are willing to implement



Democratic Art Seven: Public Judgment

Hallmark

- ✓ Discriminating reason, arrived at through talk and reflection.

Benefits

- ✓ Better Solutions
- ✓ Greater willingness to accept tough trade-offs.

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Learn to accept the consequences of one's choices
- ✓ Explore the values that underlie alternative choices
- ✓ Try deliberation by randomly selected groups of citizens

Public talk of the type just described makes possible what many call public judgment.

Public judgment is not public opinion. What gets polled in surveys as public opinion usually registers our knee-jerk reactions—our undigested private thoughts about issues and controversies. Public judgment is something quite different. It emerges only in hearing other points of view, thinking through the clash of values. It is the difficult, rewarding process people in Connecticut and Montana went through in our examples earlier.

Public judgment involves dialogue, of course. But it is distinguished by a willingness to make choices—even tough choices.

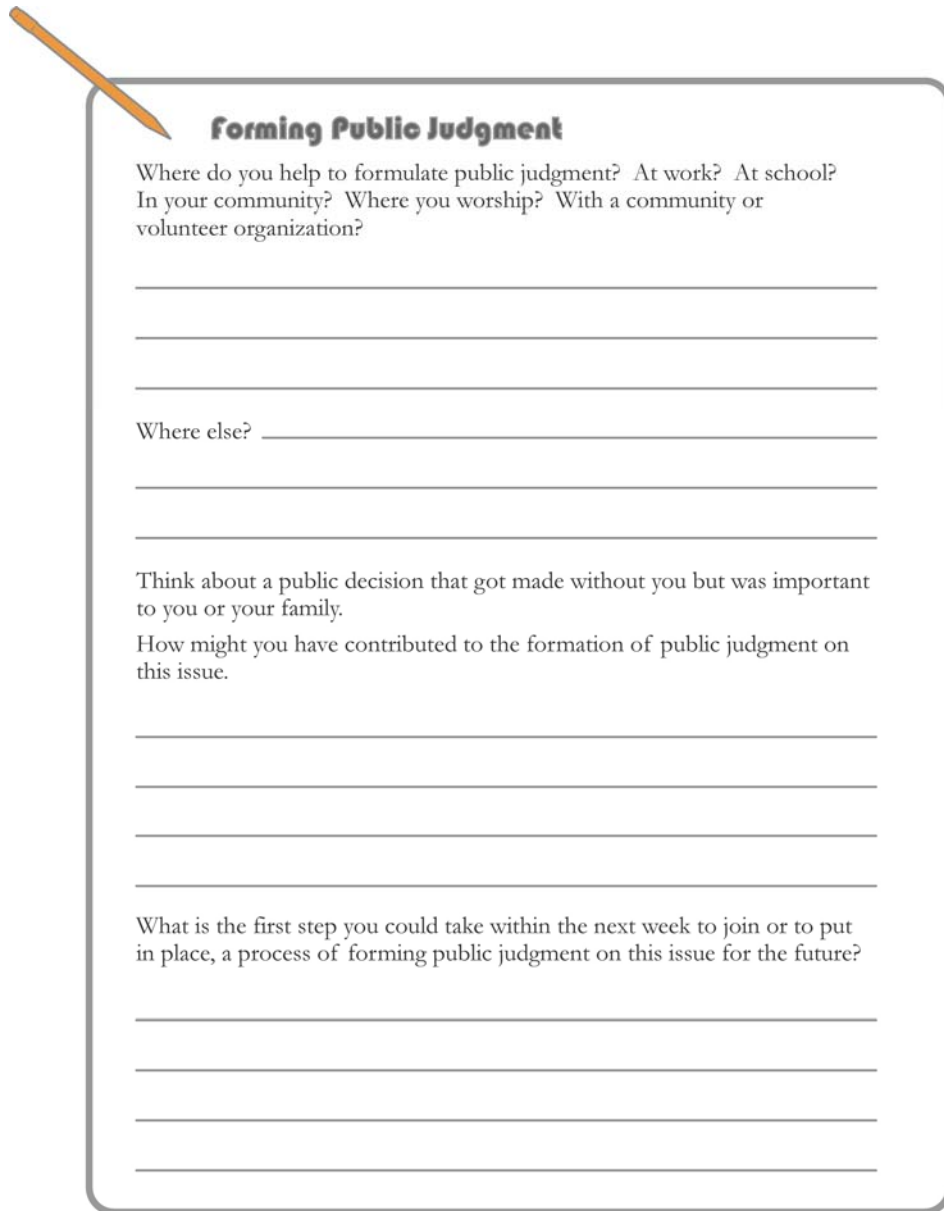
Public Judgment How-To's

Here are several lessons from Americans who are learning how to come to public judgment.

Learn to Accept the Consequences of Our Choices. In his book, *Coming to Public Judgment*, Daniel Yankelovitch argues that a key measure of high-quality public opinion is not how much information we citizens have under our belts. Rather, “the quality of public opinion [should] be considered good,” he writes, “when the public accepts responsibility for the consequences of its views, and poor when the public, for whatever reason, is unprepared to do so.” Citizens’ demanding more public services but refusing to pay the taxes to cover them is a prime example of his point.

In 1988, the Maverick Institute, along with the University of Arizona’s 4-H, involved 360 young people, aged twelve to eighteen, in small group talk about pressing social issues. The process clearly affected the teenagers: in one county, after thoroughly discussing alternative perspectives, the young people’s willingness to increase taxes to pay for public improvements changed from a slight majority in favor to a seven-to-one majority in favor.

How do people come to accept tough trade-offs? Only as we ourselves weigh alternatives, so that the choices are ours, not trade-offs forced upon us by others.



Forming Public Judgment

Where do you help to formulate public judgment? At work? At school?
In your community? Where you worship? With a community or
volunteer organization?

Where else? _____

Think about a public decision that got made without you but was important
to you or your family.
How might you have contributed to the formation of public judgment on
this issue.

What is the first step you could take within the next week to join or to put
in place, a process of forming public judgment on this issue for the future?

Explore the Values That Underlie Alternative Choices. The Oregon Health Decisions movement offers a powerful example of how ordinary citizens began by exploring underlying values, which then guided their discussion about health care. After agreeing on one core, shared value—that access to basic health care is a commitment that citizens make to one another through democratic government—these Oregon citizens were then able to make difficult choices about how to allocate public funds.

Try Deliberation by Randomly Selected Groups of Citizens. Some Americans who refuse to accept the shrinking of political debate into ten-second sound bites are responding with citizen juries. In citizen juries, randomly chosen citizens join together to study an issue and make public their findings.

An example from the 1992 elections gives a taste of their potential. That year, the League of Women Voters sponsored citizen juries in both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Two groups of eighteen average citizens were selected by random telephone survey. The juries studied the two senate candidates' records, held two days of hearings with knowledgeable witnesses, and on the third day questioned the candidates. They released their findings, along with their reasoning, believing their deliberations offered other citizens a real service.

Citizen juries are no substitute for the ongoing practice of developing public judgment we've seen in citizen organizations featured throughout this book. But they do, along with many other models, offer an enrichment of public deliberation. They can demonstrate the distinct contribution that citizens can make to evaluating public issues.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 8: Celebration and Appreciation ■

expressing joy and appreciation for what we learn
as well as what we achieve



Democratic Art Eight: Celebration and Appreciation

Hallmark

- ✓ Celebration and appreciation integrated into the daily practices of public life

Benefit

- ✓ Sustains and recharges.
- ✓ Builds loyalty and strengthens relationships

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Celebrate the learning as much as the winning
- ✓ Create a celebratory spirit.
- ✓ Show appreciation of your adversaries as well as your allies.

Too many organizations and businesses feel that they can't take time to celebrate and express appreciation. There's just too much to do. They see celebration and appreciation as "extras" that can happen after all the work gets done. But in the most effective organizations, celebration and appreciation are integral to their very purpose.

Celebration and Appreciation How-To's

Here are just a few suggestions from citizens who are learning the importance of celebration and appreciation.

Celebrate the Learning, Not Just the Winning. We don't always get what we want. But out of every effort comes learning to be appreciated. After one citizen group's legislative campaign failed, we noticed that their newsletter celebrated how much their members had learned about both the issue and the citizen lobbying process. So by "celebration" we don't necessarily mean throwing a party. We also mean acknowledging and expressing satisfaction in what has been accomplished, even when an intended target is not met.

Create a Celebratory Spirit. Colored balloons. Noisemakers. Streamers. Amusing props. Live music. All these features create a mood of celebration, even in a public gathering dealing with deadly serious problems. Each time we've attended public meetings held by the Sonoma County Faith-Based Organizing Project, for example, our moods are lifted as soon as we enter the auditorium. These techniques infuse their meetings with a spirit of celebration, despite the fact that this group faces such difficult issues as affordable housing and school reform.

What are they celebrating? Not just a victorious moment. One feels that we—all of us in these meetings—are celebrating the power of citizens to come together with a common vision. (And that

power is not lost on the public officials present.) We're celebrating the hard work required to pull off the event. We're celebrating the power of hope over fear. And it works. After two hours, members walk out feeling new energy, not drained from another boring meeting.

Show Appreciation of Your Adversaries as Well as Your Allies. Many of the groups you've read about in this book thrive because of the unpaid efforts of volunteers. Feeling appreciated can substitute for a lot of non-existent paychecks. The most successful groups that we know acknowledge their volunteers at events in which the particular contribution of each individual is described. As members hear what others do, appreciation becomes a means of building a sense of interdependence within the group.

But the tough part is showing appreciation of our adversaries. Recall the earlier advice to make no permanent enemies. It was one how-to of creative conflict. Sometime in the future, you may need your present adversary's good will. Members of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, at the close of one legislative session, passed out buttons to legislators whom they had been battling all year. The buttons read "I survived the 1990 legislative session!" In this gesture, KFTC members expressed their good will and appreciation for their adversaries' hard work. At another point, KFTC set up a lemonade and cookies stand for legislators near the state rotunda. The message of appreciation was mixed but good-spirited: "The lobbyists take you out for expensive meals. Come have some lemonade with us!"

Gestures like these, along with letters and calls of thanks (even when you disagree with the person), do not signal weakness. You'll establish your credibility as a person or group with strength, who knows you'll be around for the long haul.



Doing Democracy

■ Art 9: Evaluation and Reflection ■

assessing and incorporating the lessons
we learn through action



Democratic Art Nine: Evaluation and Reflection

Hallmark

- ✓ Public and private assessments of lessons learned through action

Benefits

- ✓ Helps participants to improve their practice of all the other arts of democracy
- ✓ Develops group and individual memory

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Create a new habit: immediately after each public action, discuss what worked, what didn't, and what lessons were learned
- ✓ Encourage self-evaluation
- ✓ Record lessons, so that history becomes a basis for ongoing learning.
- ✓ Reflect by digging deeper; it complements public evaluation.

Unfortunately, human beings have short memories. We tend to focus on the challenges of today, often failing to see or appreciate the distance we've traveled. This human tendency underscores the importance of the art of reflection and evaluation.

The most effective organizations and workplaces use every meeting, every discussion, every significant public event as an opportunity for learning—in part by immediately evaluating what went on. How, for example, did the event help them move toward their goals? An in-depth evaluation reviews the

overall strategy and the effectiveness of the individual participants. It also examines any changes in the development and distribution of power.

Evaluation and Reflection How-To's

Here are several suggestions for how to make evaluation and reflection part of the culture of your organization or business.



Group Evaluation

The structure of a good evaluation can be elegantly simple. A few basic questions can become powerful tools of change. For example:

How do you feel about what happened? (Answers can be in one-word descriptions of emotions: upset, happy, relieved, angry, energized. No intellectualizing allowed.)


What worked?

What didn't work?

What could we do better?

Make an Evaluation of Each Meeting or Public Action a Habit. A good evaluation is far from a rote exercise. It deeply probes not only what we learned but how we might change based on what we've learned.

In the Youth Action Program (YAP) in New York City, both the staff and the trainees get together every Friday for an evaluation. Christopher Hatcher, who joined YAP to learn the building trades and escape inner-city poverty, told us that he appreciates the evaluation because "everybody has time to talk. Everybody listens." There's praise and there's criticism. The leadership is knowingly creating camaraderie in the group. At YAP, terms like good or bad are avoided in evaluations. The staff is acutely aware of the low self-esteem these young inner-city residents carry into the program. Staff person Richard Green explained that these kids are too often called bad. "We don't want to continue that," he says. "So we simply talk about specific behaviors and note whether they are occurring 'more frequently' or 'less frequently.'"



Evaluation, Reflection, and You

Write down the tools you use (such as discussions, a journal, or letters) to contribute to your ongoing learning by consciously:

Evaluating _____

Reflecting _____

Building memory of lessons learned _____

Where could you strengthen your practice of these arts? How might you do this?

What benefits could you expect if you did this? _____

What is one first step you will take in the next week to improve your practice of these arts?

Encourage Self-Evaluation. In the most effective evaluations, citizen groups that are concerned about building the leadership strengths of their members are careful not to let criticism demoralize people. At Brockton Interfaith Community in Massachusetts, organizer Scott Spencer explained to us that after any “action” they always begin by encouraging participants first to evaluate their own performance before anyone else makes a critical comment. Acknowledging one’s own mistakes is easier for most of us than hearing others’ criticisms. The approach also fosters self-awareness.

Record Lessons So That History Becomes a Basis for Ongoing Learning. In most organizations and institutions, participants know little about the experiences of those who’ve gone before them. To create group memory, participants create records from which others can draw over time. Without them, members can’t learn from group experience or feel rooted in the efforts of others. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, for example, celebrated its tenth anniversary by publishing its own history as a handsome hardback book. And Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) has recorded its group memory for others who are starting worker-owned and -managed enterprises. There’s no blueprint to follow, CHCA stresses, but it wants to provide a “sense of history.”

Reflect by Digging Deeper; It Complements Public Evaluation. By reflection we mean deeper thought—sitting back and asking, What did I learn from all this? Why am I doing it? What do I need to learn to become more effective in the future? While we can be aided by the penetrating questions of others, our most important insights come when we take the time to be alone, in order to listen to ourselves and record how we perceive our own growth.

Ken Galdston at the Merrimack Valley Project describes how his group encourages reflection: “We do one-on-one meetings with people about where they are going with their lives. At the Leadership Retreat, we reflect on their self-interest. What’s the fit between their stated self-interest—things like personal growth and family—and how they are spending their time? We try to help people bring them into alignment.”



Doing Democracy

Art 10: Mentoring

supportively guiding others in learning
these arts of public life



Democratic Art Ten: Mentoring

Hallmark

- ✓ Encouragement and guidance to motivate learning

Benefits

- ✓ Makes learning possible, regardless of the starting point
- ✓ Motivates
- ✓ Builds self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment for all.

Some 'How-To's'

- ✓ Model the arts
- ✓ Supportively "push"
- ✓ Break learning down into small steps
- ✓ Team up newcomers with old-timers.

In conversations with hundreds of people who are learning the arts and skills of Living Democracy, the concept of mentoring came up often. We learned to think of a mentor as an on-the-scene guide or coach. This is a person who asks the leading questions, offers suggestions and feedback, and also demonstrates the skills being learned.

Mentoring How-To's

The following examples suggest guidelines for using mentoring to help individuals and groups develop new skills in the practice of Living Democracy.

Model the Arts. Jeanne Gauna of the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) is convinced that people learn the art of positive conflict by seeing it in action: "We teach it by doing, by modeling. We encourage people to see the value of different points of view. A lot of it has to do with facilitation of our meetings. We show facilitators how to point out the value of differing views—to say 'that's a good point. He's right. That's another good point,' even when the points seem radically opposed."

Supportively "Push." Preschool teacher Dulcie Giadone described how mentoring—with some friendly pushing—allowed her to become president of HART, an influential citizens' organization in Hartford, Connecticut. "The organizers keep pestering you," she told us. "The meeting two weeks from now would you chair it?" Jim [a staff person] would come early to the meeting and go over everything with you. He would always support you. It took me one year to handle the meeting completely on my own." Elena Hanggi, who moved from homemaker to head one of the nation's largest citizen organizations, ACORN, used her own story to explain the importance of being pushed: "The first time, I literally had to be shoved to the podium to speak to the city council. The staff

organizer knew that I could do it. I even knew that I could do it, but I still was afraid. If all that stands in the way is fear, sometimes you need others to help you get past that fear.”

Break Learning Down into Small Steps. Mentors guide people, training them step-by-step in the new skills they need. “We teach people facilitation [of meetings] by having people do it,” says Jeanne Gauna of SWOP. “People learn by watching others. So we start in pairs at first. One person handles names and calls on people. The other handles the summing-up process and keeps the meeting moving.” Soon the person in the less challenging role of just calling on speakers can take on the more difficult tasks.

Team Up Newcomers with Old-Timers. Businesses, too, are learning that peer coaching works. Rather than use a training manual or have a boss serve as instructor, a company will have an experienced peer build a mentoring relationship with a new employee. W.L. Gore, maker of Gore-tex, is a good example. Gore calls his approach a “sponsor system.” For each new hire, an experienced employee volunteers to be his or her starting sponsor. The sponsor, not the person in authority over you, teaches you the ropes. And it’s the sponsor who decides after three months whether your contribution to the company warrants a permanent position. A second type of sponsor is the advocate sponsor, whose job it is to know your accomplishments and to speak on your behalf.

Teaming up with more experienced participants in public life—whether from community organizations, churches, schools, or workplaces—helps us manage our fears, learn new skills, and grasp the context within which we are working.

We’ve briefly discussed ten arts of effective public life that Americans are learning in diverse settings, from the workplace to the community group. And we’ve woven into the entire book the suggestions of many people as to where you can practice these arts.

As we deliberately develop the arts of democratic public life, we help to reshape the institutions of everyday living—from workplaces to schools—so that their rules and practices support, instead of thwart, growth in these skills. And in the process we begin to shape the very qualities of character so needed for a living, working democracy.

CHAPTER THREE

Embracing the Democratic Self

The Arts of Democracy suggest more than a distinct set of skills. They add up to a certain quality of character. Someone who, for example, listens actively, uses anger effectively, develops judgment through dialogue, and regularly practices reflection and evaluation is more than just highly skilled. Such a person has honed attitudes, values, habits of mind, and a temperament – that support those skills. We call the sum of these qualities of character the democratic self.

The emergence of the democratic self in a Living Democracy poses a radical challenge to long-held assumptions about the human personality.

The classical eighteenth-century liberal view of the self as a social “atom,” isolated from others and driven by narrow self-interest, has been largely discredited by modern social science—even though it continues to shape our “you’ve got to look out for Number One” culture. That human beings are profoundly social creatures is increasingly appreciated: we become who we are through interaction with others. Abraham Maslow, one of this century’s most celebrated psychologists, urged individuals to develop a wider circle of identifications...what he called the ‘more inclusive Self.’

One problem blocking the emergence of Living Democracy, however, is that most popular psychology still defines quite narrowly this social aspect of the human personality. Even though it has left behind its simplistic self-fulfillment-is-all theme of the seventies and eighties, the prevailing message in popular psychology remains: we grow, we change ourselves, we find happiness by pursuing our private relationships. Best-selling self-help books coach us in finding ourselves through introspection—through personal journals, dream analysis, body work—and by working through issues of love and control in our intimate relationships. While many of these techniques can enhance our lives, they are simply not sufficient either to produce the individual happiness we want or the society we want.

Living Democracy—what we’ve found working in the lives of people who shaped this book—suggests that a myopic focus on self, and on intimate private relationships, ignores a huge part of the human personality. Human beings also grow, find ourselves, and find meaning as we act with others on concerns beyond ourselves. As we discover what we uniquely bring to the community in which we live. As we reshape who we are by interacting with others who are different from us.

Because the prevailing culture has so long devalued the contribution of regular citizens, too many of us have acquiesced to the notion that private life is all there is. Public life comes to be viewed as only what celebrities and activists have. But the effective people whom you have met here are teaching us something else: without rich public lives our growth remains stunted, our private lives impoverished.



Four Qualities of the Democratic Self

The democratic self:

- Has patience even with oneself
- Values learning as much as winning
- Takes some discomfort in stride
- Is creative in the face of ambiguity

We believe that people who are bringing democracy to life are developing distinct qualities. A number of these qualities cluster around a common theme: the democratic self keeps the big picture in mind. Because it would take another book to explore the qualities of the democratic self in the depth they deserve, we've chosen to focus here on this cluster.

Patience, Even with Oneself

Patience as a democratic art goes much deeper than being able to wait for the bus without getting upset. It is a frame of mind—a large frame of mind.

Anyone consciously setting out to improve a human-made institution—a workplace, an organization, a bureaucratic agency, a school, any structure at all—is likely to encounter frustration, disappointment, sometimes even betrayal. Things are always more complicated than we imagine they will be. Every change creates unanticipated outcomes. Sometimes people act against even their own best interests.

When philosophers ponder this fact of inevitable disappointment, they simply call it the human condition. From Shakespeare's graceful pen, it was what occurs too often "twixt the cup and the lip." The less poetic among us simply groan, "life's tough," while the more coarse reduce it to that unlovely bumper sticker, "s—t happens."

As we develop a public life in which we work for ends we care about deeply, these painful truths—that life and social change can be deeply frustrating—require something even deeper than ordinary patience. We need an appreciation of the unevenness of human growth.

Gerald Taylor, for example, the citizen organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation, pondered aloud how he manages to derive enormous satisfaction from his work, despite inevitable setbacks. "Philosophically I do not believe in the inevitability of progress," he said. "I only believe in change. The beauty of this work is that you are participating fully in the human condition. That means it's not linear—not a straight line going up. So I don't get upset when things don't go as planned.

"This work has taught me the meaning of real patience. Every success has seeds of new problems. I try to prepare leaders for this, so they don't get the idea that they can find the solution . . . To be effective, you have to be at ease with the human condition—its irrationality, its pathos."

And Carol Ford at Save Our Cumberland Mountains voiced a very similar idea: "With SOCM, I learned that you may not move a mountain in a day. You chip away at it. With that kind of thinking, things don't have to overwhelm you."

Gerald's and Carol's views were echoed by Adam Urbanski, head of Rochester's teachers' union.

“Democracy means not dramatic changes but pragmatic improvements,” he says. The greatest danger facing Rochester’s school reform, he feels, is not from its opponents but from those supporters who expect results too soon.

The importance of cultivating the quality of patience also arose when we talked with business analysts about democratizing the workplace. Henry Sims warned, “You cannot expect people to take over new responsibilities too fast.” Learning takes time. He stressed that sometimes introducing self-managed teamwork produces a “temporary fall in productivity that is difficult to accept.” And he went on to emphasize that “Managers have to accept this. Persistence is needed here.”

An Emphasis on Learning

Gerald’s, Carol’s, and Henry’s comments suggest a new way of thinking about growth itself. As some wiser than we have said, it’s not about solving all our problems. Growth is about moving from one set of problems to a better set of problems. In other words, as long as we can take satisfaction in our own learning, we never feel defeated. Even if we have not reached a goal, we can appreciate the capacities we’ve gained in the process of trying, capacities that make it possible for us to tackle new challenges.

Some Discomfort Goes with the Territory

Developing the democratic self may not always be comfortable. In fact, things can feel worse before they feel better. Learning any new skill feels awkward at first, whether it’s playing tennis, mastering the piano, or learning how to make a democratic classroom work.

Remember teacher Kim Wile in Ohio, whose students became a key source of information for voters of their county? She acknowledges that “democracy can be an untidy and challenging business.” Recall that she acknowledged feeling “quite comfortable in the traditional role of the directive teacher. It is far more nerve-racking to take the back seat and let the students take the reins of control.” But, she adds, “watching the students’ pride, excitement, and growth” made this major change worth the effort.

Similarly, corporate CEO Ralph Stayer decided to abandon authoritarian management, but that turned out to be more difficult than he’d imagined. “Initially, I had hoped the journey would be as neat and orderly as it now appears on paper. Fortunately—since original mistakes are an important part of learning—it wasn’t. There were lots of obstacles and challenges, much backsliding, and myriad false starts and wrong decisions.”

Being Creative Despite Ambiguity


Like Gerald Taylor, Larry McNeil is an organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation. Larry works in southern California, and he talked with us about a related quality that he feels is essential to democratic public life. “In IAF, we teach that there’s tension between the world as it is and the world as you wish it to be. Sure, there’s part of the world as it is that you don’t want to mimic, but it’s not simple. You can’t live in the world as you wish it to be. So public life has an edge. You have to live with the tension....You have to learn how to act when things aren’t simple, clear-cut. You have to learn that it’s possible to have core values but be flexible about how you get there. The successful people live with the tension.”

The statements we’ve heard from Gerald, Carol, and Larry capture key qualities that can be cultivated in public life. But their words also suggest an additional dimension of the democratic personality: not simply living with ambiguity, but being creative in the face of ambiguity.

“I used to say apologetically that democracy is messy,” Jerry Jenkins told us. She was Citizen Participation Coordinator in St. Paul for many years. “Now I’ve decided that I don’t need to apologize

for democracy. You just have to wade in. You learn the value of creative conflict. You learn how deeply interdependent we all are.”

And as you’ve noticed throughout this book, Jerry and hundreds of other citizens have found ways to turn this “messiness” into creative solutions to the problems that disturb them. Refusing to wallow in despair, they are developing themselves and working with others to devise pragmatic approaches that build realistic hope.



Putting Insights into Practice

You've read what several successful people say about patience and the practice of Living Democracy in their lives. In the left hand column, we've paraphrased a few of their insights. In the middle, jot down how much you both accept and practice the insights that each of these people offer us. And include in the right column your ideas about how you can use these thoughts to improve your own life.

| Insight | Extent to which I accept it and practice it | How I can apply it to my own life. |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Improvements are not linear. Every success has seeds of new problems. (Gerald Taylor) | | |
| Change comes slowly, through steady, persistent work. (Carol Ford) | | |
| Don't expect dramatic change, work instead for pragmatic improvements. (Adam Urbanski) | | |
| Mistakes are an important part of learning. (Ralph Stayer) | | |
| Building the democratic spirit in others is less comfortable, more challenging - and much more rewarding - than being directive. (Kim Wile) | | |
| We have to live with the tension of real-world complexity. (Larry McNiel) | | |
| Conflict and interdependence are both messy and valuable. (Jerry Jenkins) | | |

The Democratic Self Isn't Neatly Contained

The democratic self doesn't express itself in only one arena of our lives. As we learn the arts of effective problem solving in, say, a democratic workplace, that learning spills over into other areas.

One worker in a team-run plant noted a similar spillover: “I’m in a Cub Scout organization,” he said. “The meetings there used to be atrocious. [Then] I instituted an agenda system like we have at team meetings here at the plant.”

And a co-worker described his success in “getting more participation” in meetings of his volunteer fire department. “It has worked,” he says.

And young people we’ve spoken with have seen how the experience of discovering public life beyond school has altered their experience in school. Sixteen-year-old Kathy Rivera of Brooklyn is one. At thirteen she joined the Toxic Avengers, a group of teenagers started just months earlier from a project in a high school science class for youngsters who had dropped out of regular school. The Avengers’ first big victory was forcing a glue factory in the neighborhood to stop dumping toxic wastes into the sewer. “Before I joined I was a more timid person. I kept to myself. I let people suppress my ideas,” Kathy told us. “But I’ve learned to let people know what I believe in.” She explained that now she’s more motivated in school “because in the future I want to make a difference.”

Challenging the Democratic Self

Formal democracy requires little of us. In formal democracy, it’s the laws and institutions that count—and they’re already established, many of them two hundred years ago. All that’s really asked of us is that we pay the bill each April 15th and show up at the polls every few years.

In contrast, Living Democracy requires a great deal—not from us, but of us. Rather than being an added burden we have to bear, Living Democracy means attending energetically to the development of our democratic selves.



Developing Our Democratic Selves

Here we have drawn contrasts. In the left-hand column are some of the qualities that tend to thwart effectiveness. The right-hand column captures some of the qualities we find in the many effective people we're meeting. In cultivating the arts of democracy you will be developing these qualities. Circle those you think are most important for you to develop.

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Pessimistic | — vs. — | Prudently optimistic |
| Easily defeated | — vs. — | Persevering |
| Despairing | — vs. — | Hopeful |
| Self-pitying | — vs. — | Self-respecting |
| Simply blaming | — vs. — | Accepts responsibility for actions |
| Intolerant of uncertainty | — vs. — | Expects the unexpected |
| Fearful of embarrassment | — vs. — | Takes discomfort in stride |
| Mistrustful | — vs. — | Critically aware |
| Unthinking | — vs. — | Strategic |
| Passively frustrated | — vs. — | Actively engaged |
| Stuck | — vs. — | Always growing |
| Intolerant | — vs. — | Values diversity |
| Shut off | — vs. — | Seeking connection with others |

Embracing the Effort That Change Requires

Some popular psychology that focuses on individual fulfillment suggests that healthy gratification is effortless: “What’s right is what feels good. Anything else means self-sacrifice, and that’s unhealthy.”

The understanding of human beings that makes Living Democracy possible is based on a much older tradition. This tradition assumes that most of us naturally desire what is best for our community, even when we find it difficult to achieve. We want to contribute. Even when such work is challenging. Even when it doesn’t offer immediate gratification. Even when it entails suffering through self-doubt and fear.

The people you’ve met here confirm this view of human nature. Making a positive difference in their communities or workplaces or schools is what they genuinely want to do. Yet it obviously entails effort. They, and, we believe, most Americans, are willing—given encouragement, examples, and training—to go to a great deal of effort in order to develop the capacities they need to become effective contributors to our larger society.

Developing the democratic self takes effort, of course. But why might we bother?

As we address that question, teacher Nancy Corbett comes to mind. For nineteen years she taught as a traditional stand-in front- of-the-classroom teacher. It was comfortable. She was in control. Then she began to challenge her democratic self, and as a consequence, she writes, “I need not fear drying up (like a crinkled apple doll . . .) behind my desk, just because I have taught for so long. While projects like these [involving students in the community] will mean extra work and extra time, my own staying alive in the classroom is more than sufficient reason to adventure democratically with learners.”

Our thanks and suggestions for additional resources.

Thank you for engaging the ideas in this book. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please offer criticism, suggestions and your own stories via

info@smallplanetinstitute.org

Frances Moore Lappé, July 2007

Additional resources for your consideration:

- Frances Moore Lappé, *Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save Our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life* (Jossey-Bass 2006)
- Frances Moore Lappé, *Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity & Courage in a World Gone Mad* (Small Planet Media, 2007)
- Roger Fisher and William L. Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981)
- Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Polity Press, 1998)
- Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb, *Great Meetings!* (Hanson Park Press, 2004)
- Matt Leighninger, *The Next Form of Democracy* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2006)
- Paul Rogat Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time* (St. Martin's Griffin, 1999)
- Elaine Cogan, *Successful Public Meetings: A Practical Guide* (American Planning Association, 2000)
- *A Guide to Community Visioning* (Oregon Visions Project, 1993)