

TBG Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles of The Truth Beauty and Goodness Commission (TBG) in regards to group dynamics supports a **Do No Harm** policy.

This document contains guidelines for the resolution of personal and interpersonal conflict. These Guiding Principles reflect different cultures and modes of operation that function favorably between peoples everywhere already in existence.

I. Personal Introspections and Self Examination

An excellent outline for such introspection can be found in the book *The Four Agreements*, and they are:

1. **Be Impeccable with your Word:**

Say only what you mean. Avoid using the Word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your Word in the direction of truth and love.

2. **Don't Take Anything Personally:**

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

3. **Don't Make Assumptions:**

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.

4. **Always Do Your Best:**

Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

*Adapted from the book *The Four Agreements* by Miguel Ruiz, <http://www.toltecspirit.com> and is available on Amazon.*

II. Assessment and Identification of Blockages

The next item that speaks to our personal responsibility in how we Do No Harm is one of managing an understanding approach to our fellow man, and how we deal with the energy that is presented to us.

Our desire is to work harmoniously together to achieve a common goal and build unity.

Occasionally blockages in the forward motion of projects and relationships can be observed. They can present as:

- A chill in the conversation. People are not willing to open up. There is evasiveness and little communication.
- Either a torrent of charged words spews forth, or clipped one word answers are all that can be managed.
- A blast of unwarranted energy aimed at one or more individuals.
- An argumentative or challenging tone.
- Belittling or berating others.
- Personal attacks. etc.

When such roadblocks are recognized, an assessment needs to be made in order to identify the irritation. This requires the co-operation of the entire group, as well as courage, honesty and humility.

III. Mediation When Necessary

The Native American understanding of how to resolve conflicts opens up the possibility of looking at these guidelines from an indigenous point of view where respect and honor to one another is paramount as a principle within the community at large. Native American wisdom focuses on healing wounds, and bringing peace through good feelings, not fear. Such wisdom teaches us to be mindful of a person's emotional wellbeing. We must strive to heal broken relationships, and rebuild personal self-esteem and confidence. We all need to feel safe. Mediation should provide closure.

1. LISTENING: Listening provides everyone an opportunity for their side to be heard. In our usual and everyday discourse, it is rare that we get to express a complete thought without being interrupted. Most people do not fully hear the person who is speaking, because they are concerned with their own opinions, and the need to express those opinions immediately. One way to promote deeper listening skills at mediations is to invoke a no-pen-and-pad rule. This rule demands that the parties put down their pens and not take notes, but instead really listen and understand what the speaker is saying. As Stephen Covey has written - Seek First to Understand Then to be Understood.

<https://www.franklincovey.com/the-7-habits/habit-5/>

2. RESPECT: Treat everyone with respect. Learn to appreciate people and their differences. Enhance your ability to truly listen to what is said, how it is said and what is not said. Each person should be treated with utmost respect, or, in other words, treated as if he or she is a visitor in your home. Challenge any tendency to partisan perception rather than an objective perception.
3. GENEROSITY: Generosity is a good thing to have, for we are all travellers together on this Earth. The benefit of mediation is to allow both parties to leave the table profiting from the exchange. The benefit received may not be as much or as little as anticipated, but the goal of any mediator is to help the parties do a risk analysis and to understand the importance of compromise within that relatively objective analysis. Mediators will strive to leave enough on the table so that all parties will benefit, and it is ultimately up to each party to decide whether to accept or reject the offer.

4. **HUMOR:** Humor is one of the most powerful tools that the Creator has given human kind. In many mediations, anger, despair, fear and dismay invade the atmosphere. Often it is up to the mediator to lighten the load. The humor cannot be forced; it has to come naturally and fit the situation and the parties. Humor, if used appropriately, may be the lubricant necessary for the gears of justice to grind smoothly forward.
5. **COMPASSION:** Human beings cannot understand another's life until they have carried the weight of that person's burdens, listened to that person's words, felt that person's pain, observed that person's actions, and walked along that person's path, sharing the others greatest longings and aspirations. Understanding those things we must then be able to sleep at that person's fire, sharing every part of the other human being's dreams and nightmares. Compassion requires that the mediator and opposing advocates be understanding, take the time and trouble to listen to another's problems and be willing to risk hearing something that might change or challenge the listener's perspective.
6. **SILENCE:** Silence was meaningful with the Native American, and his granting a space of silence before talking was done in the practice of true politeness and regard for the rule that thought comes before speech.
7. **TALKING STICK:** Do not rudely interrupt when an opposing advocate or participant is stating a position, expressing an opinion, noting a feeling, or reflecting an experience. The person interrupting generally loses face and respect; the person interrupted often feels dishonored, frustrated and angry. One way to avoid this from occurring is for the mediator to announce a no-interruption policy. Another way to enhance the values of listening, respect and silence is to use a talking stick. In Native American tradition, the person with the talking stick has the right to speak without interruption. Others without the stick have the obligation to listen in silence. Once the speaker finishes, the others may voice their opinions. It is up to the mediator to facilitate this talking stick process. At the end of this process, the speaker feels heard and the listener actually hears what the speaker has said, and takes the time to think before responding.
8. **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION:** The wise individual looks and hears the unspoken signals that scream for the need to be recognized. The gentle and sensitive listener is adept at the art of creating safety and space for sharing that allows others to express their needs.
9. **ATONEMENT:** The sincere desire to deal fairly with others, to admit our shortcomings and to make amends where needed is the mark of a person worthy of trust. Why is this step the most important move toward resolution? It is because a sincere apology or acknowledgement reflects and affords dignity that establishes an initial level of trust and reliability that allows a case to move towards resolution. There is a flip side to atonement. The flip side is "forgiveness". Forgiveness is something a victim may do, not so much for the opponent, but for the victim's own peace of mind. Forgiveness allows the shedding of emotional pain, anger and shame. It allows the victim to free himself from the past and focus on the future. Put another way, forgiveness nourishes the soul.

10. TRUST: The art of speaking harmoniously is a bit more difficult because people who are honest and direct tend to forget that brutal honesty is not always appreciated. If sensitivity is paired with intelligence, we are using our power of perception to notice where we can bring harmony in a potentially upsetting situation. Respecting the vulnerability of those who trust us to be honest and gentle is the key to the art of speaking the Truth in Harmony.
11. HEALING: Part of healing is the way you listen... always react with sympathy and compassion. So it isn't just the treatment that heals it's the hands-on understanding and cooing that sometimes makes the mediation do its work. In truth, the caring and attention are part of the medicine.
12. OPPORTUNITY for UNDERSTANDING: In appropriate cases an advocate or a mediator may encourage the person who feels unjustly victimized to view the unfortunate occurrence as an opportunity. Victims must be encouraged to avoid the negative spiral of victimization. Victims who look at tragedy as a gift in disguise, as an opportunity for growth and for inner strength will be better for it, and so will their case.
13. WISDOM: Being wise, having wisdom, is knowing what to do with what you know, when to do it, and how to do it. Or sometimes a person must know enough to do nothing.

Guidelines for Mediators

Mediators must question and listen carefully. Rather than being passive purveyors of numbers, the truly engaged and effective mediators provide honest and direct feedback. Usually, positive feedback is never hard to share, but negative or disappointing information can only be effectively conveyed after the bridge or trust has been built. "Brutal honesty," as the above quote states, is not always appreciated. It is certainly not appreciated if it is delivered before the mediator develops some level of trust with the principals. Mediators who presume to be "brutally honest" without connecting with the participants are setting themselves up for failure. This is why thoughtful mediators prefer to meet with parties in advance of a general session. This "pre-mediation caucus" may take place several days in advance of the mediation or in a "staggered start" before the actual mediation begins. In practice, a "staggered start" involves giving each party an opportunity to meet with mediator privately before going into general session. The primary purpose in such sessions is to create a communication bridge based on mutual trust and rapport.

Not only must the mediator establish trust with the individuals, the effective mediator must have character and insight to tell the truth as he or she sees it and do so at just the right time. I have discovered through success and error that the right timing takes patience, based upon both intuition and experience. The mediator must learn to be comfortable with his or her intuition. Experience allows the mediator to know what gut reactions should be shared, how much to share at a time, and when to share the truth as you see it. The "truth" cannot be delivered before it is time to do so, just as a fine bottle of wine is not opened before its time. Like fine wines, fine opinions will not be fully savored until all are ready! Like the popping of the cork, the delivery of the mediator's opinion has to be done with pomp and ceremony or even "creative genius."

In conclusion, through this process we now conclude that personal responsibility is the major ingredient for good relations between people and organizations. How one chooses to manage themselves in 'Doing No Harm' is an individual choice. A case could be made where some people perceive harm where none is occurring, but that's another story.

We are leaders in the making and there are plenty of opportunities to learn. Affecting the change we wish to see in the world, begins with ourselves.

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Revision #1

Created 17 October 2024 00:59:49 by Bee

Updated 22 February 2025 22:42:20 by Bee