



A CREATIVE RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

Give Peace a Hand....

First I need to **OBSERVE** what is going on inside myself in response to what I am observing out there in my surroundings. This means paying attention to the environment in which I find myself and recognizing, honouring and monitoring my own reactions. This is key to understanding when and how disagreements and misinterpretations can lead to break-downs and even abuse. My body will trigger off **PRESSURE POINTS**, when I am getting ready for a difficult conversation. Some people disguise their anxieties or fear with patterns of early intervention, like walking on the other side of the street or avoiding certain people or situations of confrontation or conflict. Anything for a so-called 'peaceful life'!

- *What does my body tell me and how do I respond?*

Second I need to be able to **CENTRE** myself quickly when the threat of 'doing battle' or 'running away' appears. If my emotional energy is high, then I need to put myself in touch with a place of support, strength or peace within myself...with the spirit of other people, skills or resources that will help me in this moment of reaction or confusion. I need to find a **RELEASE VALVE** and a **CIRCUIT BREAKER** in a hurry! Too late for the textbook now! I need to connect within myself in this moment – my own values and beliefs - and act from there rather than from the emotional state of others who might be fuelled by anger or aggression.

- *What does this centering process feel like for me?*

Third I need to be open to, and **LISTEN TO TRUTH OF THE OTHER**, the person with whom I disagree or who is attacking or abusing me or others. This can be really difficult if a person is hell-bent on insulting or hurting me. Nevertheless, it is what I need to learn to do if I am to understand why another person is behaving the way they are at this time. I can develop my skills in this regard by practicing regularly in situations of low threat.

- *How do I commit to understanding another person's point of view?*

Fourth I need to identify and **SPEAK MY OWN TRUTH**. This can be quite difficult unless I have the capacity to know what my own truth actually is. This can often be hidden by years of family/social conditioning or personal behaviours that I have learned from experience - such as false humility, political correctness, being overly polite – or maybe 'get in first' (pre-emptive strike), command and control, use power to get your way (bullying behaviours). These patterns can often result in passive aggression, suppressed emotions, feelings of worthlessness.... As an adult, I can learn to declare my truth, which may include offers or requests, without negating the truth of other people who see things differently.

- *How do I speak truthfully and clearly to others?*

Fifth I seek to **CREATE A BIGGER TRUTH** than that which I am capable of holding by myself from my limited point of view. This involves me in committing to: **CONVERSATIONS of TRANSFORMATION** where something else might **EMERGE**. In response to this, I/we may need to make an agreement about what to do next. This may end up by 'agreeing to disagree' or perhaps suspending, or even ending, a relationship that continues to be abusive or manipulative. We may need some outside assistance to help us move forward...a facilitator, mediator or arbitrator. I may need to withdraw my cooperation, or my tacit approval of, situations that remain unjust.

Even though there may not appear to be an immediate, successful outcome to the listening and the speaking, there is always the possibility that something will emerge as seeds sown take root and sprout in their own time. That is the gift of hope we can offer each other.

- *How am I open to what might emerge from this 'truth-sharing' process?*

