Welcome

to the

ZIPoPo

Golden Choices

Program

<u>Developed by</u>

Association for Creative Moral Education

Kazan, Russia

Neighborhood Mediation Center

Reno, Nevada

ZIPoPo

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Golden Choices

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Scripts are included with this training package as a separate document on the CD. New scripts and other information will also be posted on the web site, www.mediatenmc.org/golden.

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See separate documents on the CD for

ZIPoPo Program Outline - Scriptwriting, Acting, Directing

Scripts for DVD

Baha'i Quotes related to the Program

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Introduction

We increasingly see how the complexities of the world around us demand new and more creative solutions. We are told that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining who we are. Traditional problem solving has become a combination of power and rights based negotiation whereas modern processes are more compassionate and collaborative. Ultimately we need to realize that we are all part of one interconnected whole. This program has both a spiritual and practical path, with recognition of our divine and rational selves.

Zipopo is a program of interactive theater, where the audience views a skit around a difficult situation and then works together to devise positive outcomes. Zipopo was developed by Shamil Fattakhov in Kazan, Russia and was shown on television on 22 stations in Russia. ZIPoPo currently has programs in 62 countries around the world.

Golden Choices is a program of ethical decision making that uses the skits developed by ZIPoPo to help teach skills related to resolving difficult situations. Golden Choices was developed by the Neighborhood Mediation Center in Reno, Nevada.

The goal of both programs is to help individuals learn to make positive, constructive decisions. The keys to the program are empathy and options; empathy to look deeper inside ourselves and each other, and options for coming up with a variety of ethically based solutions. The skits on the DVD were written by young people around the world, with the credits listing the country of origin.

The program is based on the principles of:
- Unity in diversity
- Racial equality
- Gender equality
- Education
- Love, unity, trustworthiness, honesty and respect
- Morality is the outcome of truth based thought and action

We are interested in feedback, about this model or any other ideas you have for promoting ethical behavior.

Facilitator Guidance

Zipopo / Golden Choices Program

Select the skit that you would like to use. This can be either a video or a live skit that you have written. Be sure to view it ahead of time so you are familiar with the themes. Identify the names of all characters using the scripts. Share the following process with the audience (use handouts if you like) and review the steps you will be using.

This program helps develop the steps and skills used in an ethical decision making process. You use the participant handouts and can handout the entire manual if you like.

To use the program, show the video and stop it at the discussion points to engage the audience. Use the participant handouts to guide the discussion. The program can be used as a dialogue model or to teach steps in a decision making process. You may use the program in either of these two ways, or any way you choose.

1. View a skit and use the wise dialogue handout.

2. View a skit and use the participant handouts as a discussion guide, and the rest of the manual to teach an ethical decision making process.

Use the following steps as a way to teach an ethical decision making process. The underlined words refer to sections in this manual.

1. Develop <u>guidelines</u> for discussion

2. Discuss the <u>perspectives</u> of each of the parties

3. <u>Frame</u> the issue from a broader, more universal perspective

4. Examine the <u>values and principles</u> that are relevant.

5. Explore the positive, constructive <u>options</u> available to solve the issue.

6. Discuss possible <u>outcomes</u> by applying the principles to the options.

7. Inspire the audience to <u>reflect</u> on these ideas with their classmates, friends, family and neighbors.

Discussion Suggestions

Some of the possible ways to engage the audience in the discussion include:

<u>Individual</u> – do individual written exercises, where the thoughts might be written down, passed around and/or posted.

<u>Pairs</u> – discuss with one other person

<u>Small group</u> – discuss with 3 to 6 people and rotate

<u>Whole group</u> – use simple rules for discussion like everyone can speak once before anyone speaks a second time and to re-state what the person has said before you before you make your point.

<u>Visual</u> – use flip chart and overheads to track discussions

<u>Auditory</u> – make sure everyone can hear everyone, also use music and silence

<u>Kinesthetic</u> – ask audience to act out a variety of endings to the skit. Write a song or poem about the skit, or draw a picture of the skit.

Remember **ORID.**

Our perception begins with external **<u>Observations</u>** or experiences,

we **<u>Reflect</u>** on the situation and attach an emotion to it,

the observation and emotion gives meaning which is our **<u>Interpretation</u>** of the situation

which leads to **<u>Decision</u>** to act.

Golden Choices

Wise Dialogue

Framing

Identify the issue in a way that is neutral, future focused and allows for the possibility of resolution.

Principles

What is the wisdom of mankind around this issue? Are there universal principles that could be used in this situation? Discuss the principles that are important to resolving this issue and write them on flip charts or a whiteboard. This is our Wall of Wisdom.

Choices

What are positive choices available to resolve this issue?

Golden Choices What are the choices that reflect the Wall of Wisdom?

These are the Golden Choices.

Golden Choices

Participant Handouts

The highest principles are golden, options are choices,

so the best decisions are golden choices.

Guidelines

The opposite of listening is preparing to speak.

What types of interaction promote the most positive responses?

Listening _____

Speaking _____

Perspectives

The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his or her life by altering his or her attitudes of mind.
William James

Our greatest freedom is the freedom to choose our attitude.
Victor Frankl

Facts: Consider the situation from each party's perspective. What do they think happened?

Feelings: How does each party feel about the situation? Did their feelings change during the skit?

Can you ask a question that would allow the other party to see the situation in a different way? What is a question you could ask that would change the way the parties view the situation? What are their fears and dreams?

	Facts	Feelings
Party A	_____|	_____
Party B	_____|	_____
Community	_____|	_____

Framing

Seek first to understand then to be understood.
Stephen Covey
The greatest challenge to any thinker is stating the problem in a way
that will allow a solution.
Bertrand Russell

Can you state the problem in a way that is neutral, future focused, and allows for the possibility of a solution?

Personal – What is the problem from each of their perspectives?

Party A_____

Party B _____

Community - What is the problem from the perspective of the community?

Community _____

Principles

Now create a wall of wisdom.

What is the wisdom of mankind around this issue?

Are there universal principles that could be used in this situation?

Options

The key to the best solution is to have the most options to choose from.
What are the options available to each party? Fill in below.
What are each willing to do and what would each ask the other to do?

Golden Choices

The only difference between a problem and a solution is that people understand
the solution. *Charles Kettering*

Which of the choices reflect the principles that are important to both parties? What principles would you choose to apply to the choices you have available? Make a matrix with values along the top and options down the side. Now compare the choices in relation to the values. Which of the options promote your values?

Wisdom of humankind

Options	Unity	Trust	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____	

- Describe the solution you would choose.
- Act out the different solutions.
- Create artwork representing movement from problem to solution. The artwork could be a drawing, poem, song, dance or any other creative expression.

Reflection -   What worked and what could we do differently?

Golden Choices asks the parties to: speak from their own experience, listen with an open heart and mind, strive to understand the truth of the situation, consider all of the available options, apply principles to the choices, come together around the agreement, act to implement the agreement, evaluate and improve your consultative process.

It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.
Alfred Adler
Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.
Leon Bloy
We do not inherit the earth from our fathers.
We borrow it from our children.
David Bower
Peace is that state in which fear of any kind is unknown.
John Buchan
Justice is truth in action.
Benjamin Disraeli
Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony.
In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.
Albert Einstein
Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.
Thomas Edison
You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.
Indira Ghandi
I am part and parcel of the whole and cannot find God apart
from the rest of humanity.
Mohatmas Ghandi
A peace that comes from fear and not from the heart
is the opposite of peace.
Gersonides
In all things it is better to hope than to despair.
Goethe
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.
Irish proverb
It is reasonable to ask that everyone who asks justice do justice.
Thomas Jefferson
I do not want the peace which passeth understanding,
I want the understanding which bringeth peace.
Helen Keller
Compromise does not mean cowardice.
John F. Kennedy
I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends.
Abraham Lincoln
The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.
Bertrand Russell
Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind,
a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice.
Baruch Spinoza
Why does man have reason if he can only be influenced by violence?
Leo Tolstoy
I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.
Booker T. Washington

<u>Guidelines</u>

We can see that we are both one and apart, with inherent differences and similarities. In the past, problem solving has not been concerned with our interconnectedness but the modern theory of group process is starting to recognize the role it plays in helping people work together.

Each of us perceives the world in a different way and most difficulties are caused by these differences in perception. Learning theory can help us understand these different ways we perceive the world. When we allow for these differences in perception in our communication, we eliminate barriers and allow individuals and groups to become more productive.

The first step is to derive an understanding of the situation from your own perspective and then compare it to other individuals in the group. The following theories (4M) on brain function and information processing help us see how we each use our own unique abilities to perceive any given situation.

Our **left brain** mode likes structure and sequence.   Our **right brain** mode likes RANDOM PATTERNS,

33% learn by seeing and imagining,   is visual-spatial,

24% learn by listening and verbalizing,   is emotional

14% learn by doing and manipulating,   and looks at the big picture.

29% learn with more than one modality.

When we communicate with one another
7% are the words we use, **38%** is the tone of our voice, **55%** is our body language

We need to communicate using sight, sound and movement, and address both right and left brain modes to understand and be understood by everyone.

Here are some suggestions on how to address learning styles. Can you think of other activities to address learning styles? How can you integrate these activities into your discussion?

<u>Learning Style</u>	<u>Application</u>
Spiritual	Prayer, reflection
Visual	Flip charts, maps, drawings, pictures, lighting
Auditory	Music, song, clear acoustics, silence, poetry, spoken word
Somatic	Movement, tactile activity, change seats
Emotional	Interpersonal contact, get to know one another
Spatial	Room arrangement to see and hear each other

Schwarz (*SF*, 31-32) says that *group culture* is the set of values and beliefs that members of a group share and that guide their behavior. Norms are expectations about how people should behave and they help keep processes in place. A consistent pattern of culture and behavior is the key to helping keep group processes in place, which will promote a sustainable vision and achievable goals.

Guidelines direct the actions of the participants in a group discussion. Guidelines are typically divided into 2 categories: process and behavioral.

What guide-lines would be permanent, what guidelines would be adopted by meeting and what guidelines would be adopted by issue?

<u>Process Guidelines</u>

Examples of Guidelines
- Open and close with reflection (prayer or silence), reflection during difficult issues and before decision is made.
- Offer everyone the opportunity to speak once before anyone speaks a second time
- Listen to everyone in order
- Ask to hear from anyone that hasn't spoken before closing the discussion
- Offer non-verbal forms of participation (written, drawing, movement)

Meeting Types and Timeframes
- Meeting length and frequency also has a great affect on the outcome.
- It is not realistic to think that a problem can be presented, discussed and decided upon at a single meeting.
- The best decisions come from multiple meetings. Both the Quakers and Future Search use a three meeting process to introduce, discuss and decide on a course of action.
- Future Search maintains that 2 periods of sleep are needed to assimilate change. The Quakers require that an individual attend the first two meetings to be involved in the decision.

Behavioral Guidelines

Conflicts occur because disputants often fail to consider that others might perceive things differently. The single most important factor in maximizing the excellence of a group's product was the degree to which the members were able to create a state of internal harmony, which lets them take advantage of the full talent of their members (SF, 67). Communication is key to seeing things through another's eyes and resolving disputes. Until each party is able to see the other's point of view it is difficult to begin the resolution process. People use their own frame of reference and tend to jump to conclusions about others.

Two Wings of Discussion

Rational	Emotional
Frank	Loving
Straightforwardness	Compassionate
Truthfulness	Humility
Overlook faults	Calmness
Honesty	Serenity
Trustworthiness	Composure
Unfettered	Amity
Understanding	Concord
Candor	Patience
Tact	Sincere kindliness
Wisdom	Fellowship
Devotion	Friendliness
Dignity	Unalloyed love
Moderation	Courtesy

Most modern group process says that both positive and negative emotions are acceptable as part of the process. Getting to Yes says that arguing over positions endangers an ongoing relationship (GTY, 6) but that emotions should be explicit and acknowledged as legitimate (GTY, 30). However Fisher and Ury also caution not to react to emotional outbursts. (GTY, 31) Emotional Intelligence uses the term emotional hijacking when parties react to emotional outbursts.

Difficult issues inevitably involve a high level of emotion. Emotion is what shows others how deeply we care. However it can also be a deterrent to finding an

appropriate solution. The following is a summary on emotional situations from Baha'i Writings and Emotional Intelligence.

- Negative thoughts are found to most directly disrupt decision making (EI, 84).
- Unresolved issues of negative emotion limit the group's working relationship (SF, 195).
- People have what amounts to a set of bad mood thoughts that come to mind more readily when they are feeling down (EI, 73).
- The chemicals the body produces during a high state of agitation take at least 15 to 30 minutes to dissipate. (EI)
- Thoughts in the mind are associated by content and mood (EI, 73)
- Physical attunement allows moods to align (EI, 116).
- Coordination of moods is the essence of rapport (EI, 117).
- Emotional entrainment is the heart of influence (EI, 117).
- Good moods enhance the ability to think flexibly and with more complexity (EI, 85).
- A sense of humor helps find a creative solution (EI, 85).
- **People in good moods are more expansive and positive in their thinking**. (EI, 85).

Suggestions on handling emotional issues
- Ask how individuals are feeling.
- Build the social bonds of the group.
- Take a break for 15 to 30 minutes after a difficult discussion to reflect on the issues
- Look at interests, not positions
- Identify where you are and what you know
- Ask the parties to consider the other's perspective
- Re-state what the prior party has said before stating your own concerns
- Review what will happen if an agreement isn't reached
- Observe non-verbal clues to emotional feelings
- Ask every member to share why they appreciate another's contribution.
- Everyone stay at the same point in the process.

Example

<u>**Detachment**</u>

When handling difficult issues it is important to find a safe place to start. I was asked to come in and work with a local school system. There had been a lot of controversy over the goals of the Education Department, and some people were fairly upset with the services that were being provided. I was told ahead of time that there would be a lot of conflict and a lot of emotion in this meeting. I always tell people that there's always at least one optimist in the room and that's me. I believe that we can work together to resolve the issues.

Because of the controversial nature of this meeting, I thought we would start a little bit differently. We had about 30 people sitting in a semicircle and each person was given a piece of paper. I asked everybody to write down their one best idea for the Education Department. And after they were done with writing it down, I said, please pass that to the person on your right. I asked everyone to look at that and to improve upon that idea and to pass it again. After 5 or 6 six times you have no idea who wrote the original idea and it doesn't really matter because it has become the property of the group.

People could reflect on what they felt was needed, and they could read what at least five or six other people thought was needed. They could do this without having to worry about who would talk first or about the emotional nature of things. We took these ideas, and then posted them up on the wall and had everybody walk up and read through them and group them in different areas. We then voted on where to begin the discussion. We were able to begin in a much more positive tone and generate a lot of ideas that everyone had a chance to review before anyone had to speak. This alleviated much of the tension in the room and got us started on the positive actions that we can take to resolve the issues that people were concerned about.

Perspective

Yourself

Parties should know from their own knowledge and consider other points of view. They should express themselves with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.

Begin with the point of view of each of the parties individually. What does each party think happened to them? How does each of them feel about it? What are their fears and dreams?

Others

We then need to look outside of our own understanding and deeply consider other perspectives of the situation. After we have done that we can start to consider a wider range of options.

How does the situation look from the community's point of view? The community could be their immediate friends or neighbors, people living in their town or village, or people living in other parts of the world. What does the community think happened? How does the community feel about the situation?

Perspectives

The starting point in conflict resolution is considering all of the perspectives in any situation. Parties should first understand their own view of the situation and then be willing to consider what others have to say.

Several years ago I was asked to work with a high school and help them resolve an issue over open versus closed campus at lunchtime. The campus had faced a lot of challenges with high school kids leaving over lunch. And there were a lot of difficulties in having them stay on campus over lunch, so we wanted to have a discussion around making the best decision for all concerned. We asked about 80 teachers, parents and students to come together and discuss this. We used the model from 6 Thinking Hats as a way to help guide our discussion. 6 Thinking Hats has six different hats, and the only rule is that everyone agrees to wear the same hat at the same time. 6 Thinking Hats looks at the ideas in a given situation, why they will work, why they won't work, what information we need to know, how do we feel about this and what is the order of hats for the discussion.

Everyone identified all of the reasons and open campus would work and not work, and the reasons closed campus would work and not work. When the parents and the teachers saw that the students recognized all of the challenges that an open campus presented they were willing to allow the students to have an open campus. The students were able to see the situation from the parents and teachers perspective, and the parents and teachers were able to see the situation form the student's perspective.

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6 Thinking Hats (book by the same name) is a very effective model for group process that was developed by Dr. Edward DeBono, a brain researcher from Harvard. DeBono maintains that groups can be more effective when they align their thinking. This is done by asking everyone in the group to wear the same "hat" at the same time. This compartmentalization provides a very productive atmosphere for discussion. There are only two rules with 6 Hats: 1.) everyone agrees to wear the same hat at the same time and 2.) only the facilitator (chairman) can call for a change in hats. When everyone wears the same hat the group can proceed productively through deep and difficult issues.

The 6 Hats and colors are:

Process (blue), used to discuss ground rules, timeframes and process
Information (white), share relevant facts
Feelings (red), how you feel about the idea, usually go unrecorded
Ideas (green), brainstorming and generating new ideas
Will work (yellow), everyone considers why the idea will work
Won't work (black), everyone considers why the idea won't work

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<u>**Framing**</u>

Framing is expressing the issues in a way that is neutral, future focused and allows for the possibility of a solution from a broader, more universal, perspective. Framing should allow all parties to be part of the problem solving process.

Now that you have considered the issue from all perspectives, how would you frame the issue? Is this an issue that society at large is facing?

Getting to Yes develops the concepts of principled negotiation, positions and interests, and the criteria for a good decision. Positions are peoples initial starting points for negotiation. Positions are usually narrowly focused expressions of how they view resolving the situation. Interests are a broader view of the same problem and allow for a wider range of options. Many options is one of the keys to coming to a good decision.

Our first step is to gather all of the facts of the situation. As new facts come up we should review our prior assumptions and make sure that they are not based on faulty information. We should consult with anyone who has first hand knowledge of the situation, as well as bring in experts if they are needed. We should refer back to the issue as we proceed to make sure that they have not changed and that we are still trying to solve the same problem.

When people listen to each other and use concrete examples to back up their views, they get a much clearer picture of each others' reality and more likely to have a dialogue leading to shared understandings. (FS, 59).

Once everyone has a complete understanding of the history and the issues, you can start to define the problem.

Suggestions for exploring issues
- Listen first and listen to the minority.
- Consider each other's perspective.
- Develop a shared understanding.
- Break down a complex issue into component parts.
- Consult an expert or third party, if necessary.
- Group activity of understanding - draw a picture of the situation, write a song around the problem

Example

<u>Framing</u>

Once the parties have considered each other's perspective, it's important to frame the issue in a way that encompasses all perspectives. The frame should be neutral, future focused and allow for the possibility for resolution. Framing is the first step to resolving any problem. Most situations start out framed with yes or no solutions. You're right, and I'm wrong, and the key to resolution is expanding that understanding of the problem.

I was asked to come in and work with a group of homeowners in a case regarding a barking dog. This was with about 20 people in the neighborhood and I only asked four questions, but it's the way that I framed those questions that opened up the possibilities for resolution. The first thing I asked was "Where do you live?" Each person went up to a map, showed where they lived and how long they'd been there, and what their hopes and dreams were for the community. One person got up and said they had lived there for five years and look forward to raising a family there, another a couple got up and said that they had only lived there a few months and were just renting until they could afford a place. The next person got up and said they had just sold their house and were leaving within the next few months. And someone else got up and said they had been there about a year and a very happy with living there. We began with a question that allowed people to connect with one another.

The next question was "What would you like to share about your dog?" Everyone in the neighborhood had a dog and they all wanted to share what was important to them about the about the dog they owned. The third question was "What is normal for a dog in your neighborhood?" Someone said, while it's okay if they come on my lawn, I don't want them on my front porch. Someone else said that they could come in my backyard occasionally. Another said they should always be on a leash and that they should be quiet after 10 pm.

Then finally the fourth question. The fourth question was "How can we help a dog that can't live according to the norms of this neighborhood?" We came up with a list of about 20 different things that we could do. We took that list and put it in order by cost, so we started with the least expensive and moved toward the most expensive. The least expensive included things like use the doggie door, put a radio outside the house for the dog, have the dog socialize with other dogs and people. The more expensive choices on the other end of the scale were things

like doggie day care, doggie psychiatrist and doggie Valium. We didn't end up with an agreement so much as we ended up with a prioritized list. It was agreed that it would start at the least expensive and just keep working down the list until we found the things that worked.

Now, the really interesting thing in this case is that I never found out who had the dog that was misbehaving because that was not important. Nobody ever pointed a finger; nobody ever said you did this wrong or that wrong. It was all about how can we work together to solve the problem. Everybody sat in a circle around a flip chart and worked together to solve the same problem.

Truth
- ✓ is known through the heart
- ✓ is known through individual investigation
- ✓ is saying what is seen and unseen
- ✓ is rational investigation, confirmed by actual experience
- ✓ comes forth after the clash of differing opinions, expressed with enthusiasm and vigor, not from clash of feelings
- ✓ comes from a cleansed heart
- ✓ when fully known, develops trust and creates points of unity

Principles

Once we have identified the issues involved we should decide on the principles and virtues that are appropriate to the situation. These virtues should then be used in the evaluation step of options.

Ethics are values in action. Ethical decision making models use the values of the parties as a way to evaluate options. In the following table, each option is evaluated according to the values identified by the parties. In the A and B Options, a (-) means that the option detracts from the value, a (0) means that the option is neutral on the value and a (+) means that the option promotes the value. Until you have all pluses for any one option you may not have thought of all of the options. In the C and D Options the values are ranked. In the E and F Options, each option is scored. The scoring and ranking can be used to decide where to start investigating options, with the higher scores being discussed first.

Options   **Principles / Values**

	Unity in Diversity	Equality	Unity	Score	
A	+	0	–	0	Attributes
B	0	+	0	1	
C	1	3	2		Option C promotes trust
D	3	1	2		Option D promotes equality
E	3.2	5.7	6.4	15.3	Score
F	1.9	2.7	1.2	5.8	

Ethical actions are the outcome of value based decisions.

Value/ Principle	Example of Ethic
Equality	One person, one vote; equal pay
Justice	Due process
Unity	Teamwork
Truthfulness	Full disclosure

What are things that the great thinkers have said that could help solve this problem? What values would you use to resolve this situation?

Consider www.livingvalues.net as a source for values that are shared by all cultures.

The call for values is currently echoing throughout every land, as educators, parents and even children are increasingly concerned about and affected by violence, growing social problems, and the lack of social cohesion. Educators are, once again, asked to address problems which have arisen within their societies. Living Values Education (LVE) is a values education program. It offers a variety of experiential values activities and practical methodologies to teachers and facilitators to enable children and young adults to explore and develop 12 key personal and social values. The values are based on surveys with over 2500 cultures around the world.

Cooperation	Freedom	Happiness
Honesty	Humility	Love
Peace	Respect	Responsibility
Simplicity	Tolerance	Unity

Options

Problem solving is a constant process of expansion and contraction. In expansion new ideas are generated and in contraction those ideas are explored and selected.

Expansion

Modern brainstorming theory says that the key to coming up with the best outcome is having the most options to choose from. If an idea is selected too quickly it probably hasn't been thoroughly developed. Effective brainstorming techniques use the following guidelines (from Participatory Decision Making, p. 100, Future search, p. 49 and 6 Thinking Hats, p. 115):

* Every contribution is worthwhile.
* Suspend judgment.
* We can modify this process before it starts or after it ends but not while its underway.
* Open minds through questioning, clarifying and summarizing.
* Ask questions to speculate, inform, show intent, feel, and test.

The groan zone (PDM) is the point every group reaches when it feels that it has reached the end of its process without resolving the issues. Every group reaches this point and the important thing is to go on. The groan zone usually forces people out of their left brain into their right brain where they can be more creative, allowing more possible solutions to surface.

The most effective brainstorming techniques address visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning, along with right and left brain function. Activities that work within a brainstorming process:

* Random word lists to initiate idea generation. Each person selects a random word and relates it to a specific idea in the category.
* Pass around, where everyone writes an idea on a piece of workbook and passes it to the person next to them. That person then tries to improve on the idea and it continues for 4-6 iterations. This generates many ideas very quickly.
* Add feelings, colors, animals, etc. to ideas
* Crumple up ideas on paper and throw across the room (snow ball).
* Write poem, song or skit around an idea.
* Small group discussions

- Visioning - imagine the effects of the decision in relation to another time and/or place.
- Forcefield - forces that help us and hinder us
- Gap analysis - what is between where we are now and where need to be in the future
- Gallery walk - where everyone quietly observes what others have posted

Contraction

In contraction there must be some type of selection/grouping process. The following are some selected activities to accomplish this.
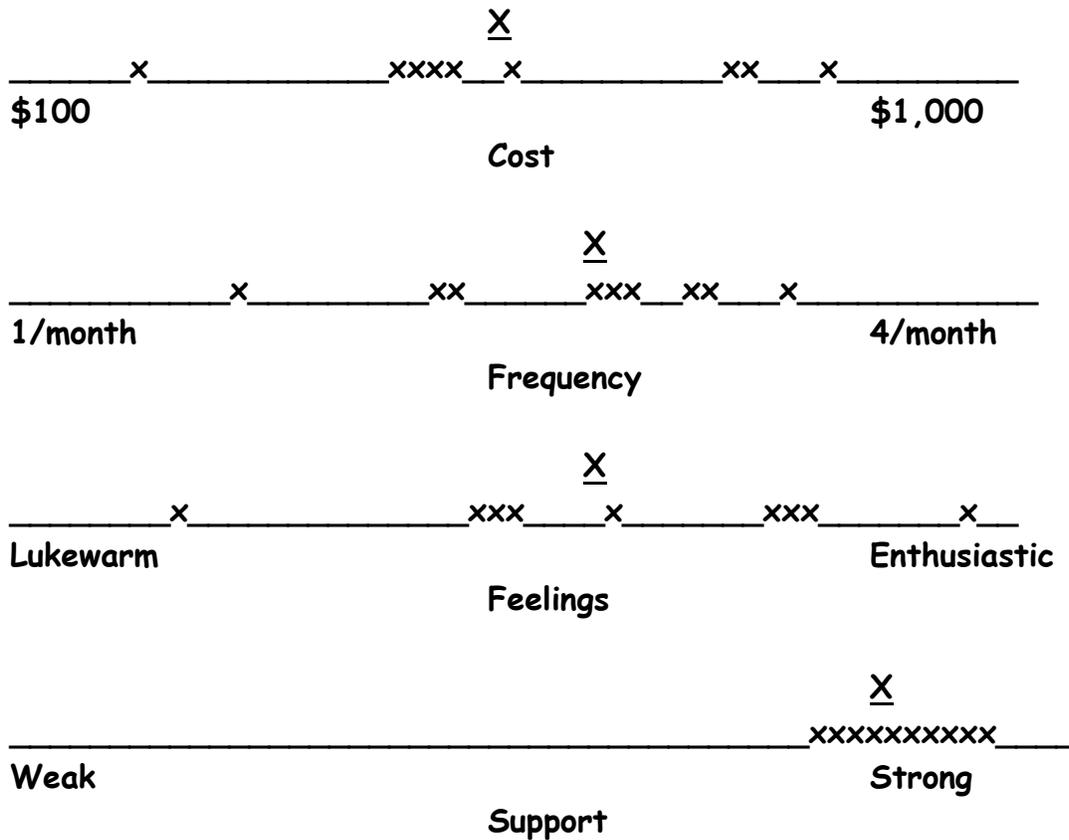
- Post all of the ideas on the wall where everyone can read and group them by whatever criteria they can identify.
- Combine and eliminate duplicate ideas generated in divergence section.
- Mind map the preferred idea, where all aspects of an idea are diagrammed as a way to completely understand it.
- Stand in room to show gradients of interest and feeling (Participatory Decision Making)
- Six Hats - state feelings, list strengths and concerns around idea
- Nominal Group Technique - n/3 vote for preference where each person votes for 1/3 of the total ideas listed. For example, if 9 ideas are listed each person can vote for 3. Votes are done by placing mark by idea. The discussion starts with the preferred idea or issue.
- Ethical decision making matrix - evaluate options by resources, relationship, cost
- Sequential questioning - pre-set questions limited by yes - no response

Choices

Choice plays a critical role in large complex issues. I was working with our Regional Planning Governing Board where they had to develop strategic planning principles for the master plan for our community. This was a group of three governmental entities, and they had sued one another off and on over the past few years. They needed new and more creative ways to look at the planning principles they wanted to adopt. So what we did was take the principles that each of the different governmental entities wanted to incorporate into the master plan and broke those down into one principle per page in a binder. We had about 120 different principles that people wanted to include when we began our discussion. There were three choices for each principle, either everyone agreed with the principle or any one person had a question or any one person at a concern over the principle.

We had a large wall in front of the group that we were working with and as we went through the binder each of the principles was placed on the wall. The areas of agreement were place high, the questions were placed in the middle and the concerns were placed low. On our first run through all the principles we ended up with about 75% of the principles with full agreement. Then we addressed the questions, and as each question was answered it either moved up or down, in other words, it either went to the consensus side or to the concerned side. And then finally, we addressed all the concerns and were able to come to agreement on those concerns on the spot. And so we adopted 120 planning principles by consensus within an hour. It just shows the importance of breaking down complex issues, giving individuals choices and having constructive dialogue that handles all the needs of the parties.

Example of Using Spectrums in Decision Making

```
                              X
_____x_____xxxx__x_____xx___x_____
$100                                      $1,000
                        Cost
```

```
                         X
_____x_____xx_____xxx__xx___x_____
1/month                                    4/month
                      Frequency
```

```
                        X
_____x_____xxx____x_____xxx_____x__
Lukewarm                                   Enthusiastic
                     Feelings
```

```
                                           X
_____xxxxxxxxxx_____
Weak                                       Strong
                    Support
```

Spectrums are one way to look at an issue outside of yes or no. When considering any issue look at the spectrum of possibilities rather than a binary yes/no choice. Place the high and low values from the group at different ends of the spectrum, then ask people where they fall in the range. In the above example, options should be investigated until there is consensus around strong support.   Re-frame the issue while standing in line to see where consensus lies.

Spectrums work well with feelings, frequency, dollars or level of agreement. Gradients can be a starting point for discussion, help in prioritizing next steps or result in a decision. For example, if the group needed to decide on how much to spend on an item, everyone could identify where they stand and the discussion could proceed to consensus much easier.

Feelings

When we talk about feelings, it's important to consider all of the choices available in any given situation. And to look at those choices in many different ways. One of the areas that we are least comfortable in addressing are the emotions around any particular issue. Emotional intelligence tells us that in every situation we face, we attach an emotion to it, and the emotion is the first choice that we make in any situation.

I was working with a group that addressed with domestic violence issues and they had a choice to make regarding the future of the organization. People were pretty much evenly divided over what they felt was the best direction for the organization until they took a look at how each other felt about the choices they had. I asked people to stand along a line representing a spectrum of feeling where one end was lukewarm support for an idea and at the other end was very strong support for that idea. Questions that we face are more often about the range between yes and no and not just yes or no. When people stood along the line and saw how they felt about each of the choices they recognized more deeply what was meaningful to each other. And once they saw what was meaningful to the other person they came to consensus almost immediately around the future direction.

Golden Choices

Process Verification

The decision making process should be established at the beginning of the meeting and verified before any agreement is reached. The process identifies when it is appropriate to move toward closure, how closure is decided and who makes that decision. The process could include a preference for consensus but allow for voting. The chairperson could decide when closure is appropriate or allow the participants to decide. Specific aspects of outcomes are discussed below.

Outcomes

The only visions to which an individual can truly become committed are those that are rooted in an individuals own set of values, concerns and aspirations (FD, 211).

Participatory Decision Making says that ground rules should specify how the group's outcome will be determined. Consensus is preferred in all models of group process. Kaner uses gradients of agreement (PD, 212) to show areas of reservation. A sustainable agreement should encourage full participation, promote mutual understanding, foster inclusive solutions and teach new thinking skills (PD, 245).

Evaluation of Ideas

It is also important that ideas are evaluated against known criteria. In deciding how to proceed, in addition to the criteria listed in the value section above, it is important to evaluate the ideas using these questions.

- Does it solve the problem completely?
- Does it solve it permanently?
- Does it create another problem?
- Does it meet our values and principles?
- Does it improve the relationship of the parties?
- Is it possible?
- Is it legal?
- Is it in harmony with the Holy Writings?

Getting to Yes say that any method of negotiation may be fairly judged by four criteria: It should produce a **wise** agreement, it should be based on **objective**

criteria, it should be **efficient**, and it should **improve or at least not damage the relationship** between the parties. (GTY, 4) Transformative Mediation says that a resolution should result in people not just being better off but better. In a world in which people remain the same, solved problems are quickly replaced by new ones (PM, 29).

Point of Consensus

  Consensus is defined as a collective agreement. The keys to achieving to consensus are:
- having complete information,
- a clear understanding of the issues,
- breaking down complex issues,
- recognition of the feelings involved,
- consideration of all parties' perspectives,
- a full exploration of the options and
- a range of potential resolutions.

  Rather than voting yes/no, consensus might ask for results along a spectrum or gradient. The spectrum could involve feelings, money or any other range.

Vote

  Consensus processes use voting as a last resort. Before voting, be sure the question is stated completely. If the issue is complex, break it down into component parts. If consensus is unattainable, the process might call for a vote to be taken. Baha'i consultation only allows for yes votes with no abstentions. If a majority does not support the recommendation then it is not implemented. If a majority does support it then all are expected to support it.

  However a vote gives little information about the level of commitment of the group. Are the people voting 51% in favor of it or 99%? Instead of asking who is in favor of the proposal why not ask who has time and would like to work on implementing it. What is the point of approving excellent ideas if no one is willing to put them into action? Think in terms of spectrums rather yes or no.

Action

   No decision is complete until there has been action taken to implement it. All decisions should have an action plan and timetable of who, what where, when and how with a budget to meet those goals.

Unity

   ❖ is the essential truth and when so understood embraces all the virtues of the human world.
   ❖ is not merely a condition resulting from a sense of mutual goodwill and common purpose,
   ❖ is a phenomenon of creative power, whose existence becomes apparent through the effects that collective action produces.
   ❖ includes all the attributes of God.
   ❖ is built by trustworthiness, attraction to each other and God, equality, justice and truthfulness.
   ❖ interacts with these attributes.
   ❖ is defined as physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.
   ❖ is peace in action.
   ❖ is thoughts, views and feelings (hearts) becoming one reality.

The highest principles are golden,
options are choices,
so the best decisions are golden choices.

Reflection

Process reflection is one of the least used and most potent tools of consultation. Below are examples of questions that might be asked at the end of a meeting. The answers should be recorded and the next meeting should open with the responses from the prior meeting. Steps should then be taken to improve the consultative process at the current meeting based on the responses.

Participatory Decision Making says that groups need to understand and recognize how they work together. Each consultation should end with a discussion of what part of the process worked and what needs to be changed. The next session should always begin with this critique as a reminder to the group. The group can then truly evolve and improve its consultative process.

In considering our consultative process we should ask ourselves:
1. What worked (pluses +)?
2. What could be changed (deltas)?
3. How do we feel about our consultation?
4. What did we learn from this?
5. What do we want to do next time?

Summary and Conclusion

Golden Choices asks the parties to:
* speak from their own experience
* listen with an open heart and mind
* strive to understand the truth of the situation
* apply principles to the choices
* consider all of the available options
* come together around the agreement
* act to implement the agreement
* evaluate and improve your consultative process

Golden Choices incorporates the foundation of modern group process. It contains the values and attributes necessary for optimal group performance. This workbook has hopefully demonstrated how skills and techniques from compatible group processes can be used in a consultative environment to enhance group performance.

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*Study Circle Resource Center, www.studycircles.org

* Books especially recommended for practical group guidance