Peace & Power
Building Communities for the Future
Fifth Edition
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National League for Nursing
PEACE AND POWER

Building Communities for the Future

Fifth Edition
Dedicated in loving memory to

Charlene Eldridge Wheeler
August 26, 1944 - March 30, 1993

Primary author of the first three editions of this book.

Her vision, wisdom, and persistent hard work were central to the conception and to the concrete reality of this book. Her spirit still lives within these pages, and within the hearts and minds of all who worked with her in groups.
This fifth edition has been possible because of the many women and men who, over the years, have inspired, assisted with, and diligently put into action the ideas herein. First and foremost, Charlene Eldridge (Wheeler), primary author of the first three editions of the book, remains an inspiration and a dearly loved, although absent, companion in this work. Her words of wisdom and humor resonate throughout these pages to remind us of her deep influence on this work.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the following for their early encouragement and support, and for the special ways in which they shaped the fundamental ideas of Peace and Power during the years Charlene and I worked together: Wilma Scott Heide; Patricia Moccia; Lisa Albecht and the women of the Emma Collective; women of the Women's Studies Program and the Feminism and Nursing class at the State University of New York at Buffalo; various coalitions of women in the Buffalo community, including the Voices of Women Writers Coalition (1982) and International Women's Day Coalitions (1982-1986); Cassandra: Radical Feminist Nurses Network (1982-1989); the Friendship Collective (1987-1989); in Australia, Judy Lumby, Pat Hickson, and Cheryle Moss; in Denver, Carole Schroeder and her children Ben and Morgan, Fran Reeder, Marlaene Smith, and Jean Watson.

In the years since Charlene's death, there have been many special friends who have inspired the continued heart politics upon which this work is based: Elizabeth Berrey, Adrienne Roy, Chris Tanner, Janet Kemp, Sue Hagedorn, Richard Cowling, Kathy Maeve, Judith Claire (Australia), Julia Carpenter, Lynne Giddings (New Zealand), Carol Polifroni, Debera Thomas, Adeline Rafael (Canada), Alicebelle Rubotsky, Mary Ann Anderson, Carrie Klima, and Maryann Kehoe.

Peace and Power has come about because of vast networks of people who deserve special acknowledgement. Many whom I have not yet met in person communicate with me through e-mail or through others to share their experiences in using these processes. Many others I have met, but only briefly in a workshop or a class where I have discussed the ideas. Still others have worked more intensively in various contexts. A special word of appreciation is extended to all who have participated in classrooms, where for just a few weeks we experience what is possible when people come together to create communities of cooperation, inspiration, and support. To all who have contributed to this work, I extend my heartfelt appreciation.
Welcome to the fifth edition of Peace and Power. Those who have used this book in the past will find the essential elements that have been part of the philosophy and the processes since the publication of the first edition in 1984. The insights and ideas that build Peace and Power remain grounded in the important political work of the latter part of the twentieth century. Ironically, the 1980s and 1990s saw a growing backlash against and apathy toward the kind of politics that erupted to resist the status quo in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the heart politics that merge peace and power are needed as never before to address the issues of growing gaps between wealth and poverty, the threats to the world’s natural resources, and the demands created by more people co-existing in less space.

Three major changes in this edition reflect a deep understanding of what has evolved in using these processes over the years. The first major change is a shift from the concept of unity to that of solidarity. The work of bell hooks has influenced this change.1 In her book Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, hooks explored the experience and rhetoric of unity, support, sisterhood, and solidarity in the white women’s movement of the last half of the twentieth century. She shows how unity conveys a sense of erasing differences and coming together in agreement, which all too often diminishes important perspectives of those in the minority. Solidarity better conveys the intentions and values of Peace and Power processes, where differences—especially those in the minority—are valued and fully respected. In solidarity, we come together with our differences intact, respected, and integrated into a greater whole.

The second major change in this edition is the deletion of the concept of consensus. This term is used too often in common language to mean a kind of agreement that leads to compromise, which is exactly not what Peace and Power processes entail. Over the years, we have made valiant attempts to redefine the term consensus, but the prevailing common meanings persisted in obscuring the meanings we intended. So in this edition, I have replaced the term in two ways. In the acronym PEACE, where the “C” previously stood for “consensus,” you will now find the idea of cooperation.” In fact, the term
cooperation better expresses the intention of PEACE, where people come together to find common ground and work together in a context where every person and every perspective is fully respected.

In previous editions, the decision-making processes of Peace and Power were called consensus. I now identify these processes as “value-based decision-building.” While this phrase is somewhat awkward, it explicitly names the kind of decision processes that have always been included in Peace and Power. This is an excellent example of the limitations of language in expressing the ways of thinking and being that are inherent in Peace and Power. While the processes themselves may seem simple, the shifts underlying them are ground-breaking and very difficult to comprehend and embrace. Chapter 8, which has been fully revised, describes in more detail than previous editions the many resources that are called upon to build—not simply make—sound decisions.

The third change is in the chapter on conflict transformation, particularly the approaches that groups can take together to constructively build transformations and growth when conflict occurs. These approaches grow out of revised ideas about critical reflection and the new conceptualizations of value-based decision-building.

Here is an overview of what you will find in the remainder of this edition:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the traditions upon which Peace and Power is built, and includes guidelines for a group to use in deciding how and to what extent to use these processes.
- Chapters 2 and 3 provide the ideas, the values, and the assumptions upon which Peace and Power processes are built.
- Chapter 4 describes what it means to make the commitment to Peace and Power values and processes.
- Chapter 5 gives guidelines for forming a group's principles of solidarity.
- Chapters 6 through 9 provide descriptions of each component Peace and Power processes in action, focusing on what happens when your group gathers together.
- Chapter 10 provides guidelines for transforming conflict, including suggestions for individuals as well as for the group as a whole.
- Chapter 11 gives guidelines for periodic transitions, such as changes in group membership.
- Chapter 12 explores using Peace and Power processes within existing patriarchal systems, particularly in classrooms, committees, and other types of work groups.
- The Notes throughout each chapter provide the traditional references to literature and to those who have helped to shape the ideas of Peace and Power in particular ways. These notes also provide anecdotal commentary about the text itself, parenthetical ideas related to the

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text, experiences that inform the text, and literature that provides additional in-depth information about topics in the text. Like the traditions that have emerged in the work of other feminist authors, the notes provide valuable information and are quite readable in their own right.

- The bibliography gives full citations of the major works that have influenced the development of the ideas explored in this text.

It is my hope that you will find many possibilities for your work and your life within these pages.
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Community. A word of many connotations—a word overused until its meanings are so diffuse as to be almost useless. Yet the images it evokes, the deep longings and memories it can stir, represent something that human beings have created and recreated since time immemorial, out of our profound need for connection among ourselves and with Mother Earth.

- Helen Forsey

We are tired to death of swimming upstream alone; we want to feel grounded, connected, to be able to touch the earth and put down roots. We are searching for simplicity and balance in our lives, for comradeship and challenge in our work and our relationships. We feel a need for hope, for possibilities in the midst of despair, for integrity and wholeness in the struggle against alienation, for stability in place of rootlessness, for nurturing and closeness based on equality and respect, not on obligation and exploitation. These needs dictate the journey that leads us to community.

- Helen Forsey

... community building must be a feminist project, and particularly an ecofeminist one. An understanding of how and why women have been subjugated by patriarchy is absolutely fundamental to any rebuilding of human society, or we will delude ourselves and our revolutions will bring us right back to the same behavior with which we started.

- Judith Plant

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1This quote is from a collection edited by Helen Forsey entitled Circles of Strength: Community Alternatives to Alienation, Philadelphia, New Society Publishers, 1993, p. 1. This is an inspiring collection of stories of intentional communities, activist communities, and religious or spiritual communities—all groups of people forming different ways of living and working together.

2Also from Forsey's collection, p. 2.

3From the Foreword to Helen Forsey's collection, p. xii.
If you have grown dissatisfied with the way things work in groups you belong to, and find yourself thinking “there has got to be a better way,” you are not alone. Many people are seeking alternative ways to build meaningful relationships and effective ways of working together in all sorts of communities and groups. This book gives you a “value map” to think about alternatives, specific guidelines for working with others to create meaningful community, and examples of real groups that serve as models of Peace and Power processes.

Peace and Power processes are specific actions that arise from carefully chosen values. In turn, the actions make the chosen values real—the values become visible and felt because they are acted upon. These processes are feminist because they create practices that are specifically designed to overcome dynamics that set up advantage for some and disadvantage for others, and that have adversely affected women in particular. The practices are informed by consciousness of that which is embedded in oppressive contexts. They are also informed by consciousness of practices that can be found in places where people who work on a more equal footing, which is often characteristic of places where women conduct their own affairs. While the practices were developed from experiences of women, as is typical of feminist approaches in other arenas (for example, teaching or doing research), the processes of Peace and Power are specifically designed to overcome all oppressions and practices that arise from imbalances of power.

Women traditionally have been peacemakers, but women’s peacemaking work and the skill it requires have been privatized and made invisible. In part because this work has been invisible, exactly what skills are required to be effective are not widely known or generally practiced in the world at large. The values that are often found in places where women conduct their own affairs can be described; the skills and actions and abilities that go with those values are what constitute the Peace and Power processes described in this book. The close link between values and action is called “doing what we know, and knowing what we do.”

Women in the feminist tradition have been remembering and are continuing to remember the wisdom of doing what we know, and of knowing what we do. While we may not always manage to do what we know, the wisdom survives and is being re-learned with every attempt, with every re-attempt. The Knowing is so deeply buried under layers and layers of patriarchal learning and con-

4The links that I describe between Peace and Power processes and that which is feminist is informed by the work of Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey in The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1993).

5See Elise Boulding, Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World (New York, Teachers College, 1988). In her chapter entitled “Conflict, Diversity, and Species Identity,” she addresses the two cultures of women and men and describes the work that women have done through women’s culture to sustain society (p. 62–64).

6Mary Daly uses hyphens like this to convey a new possibility within a word, in this case meaning putting back together the pieces—the “members”—of what we know as women. Her books Gyn/ Ecology and the Wickedary provide more enlightening study on her work with language and word usage. (See the Bibliography for references to Mary Daly’s books.)
ditioning that the trying feels extremely tedious. It is at the same time exciting, affirming, and encouraging. It becomes easier with every lived experience, especially within the context of a community that is loving and protective. Living and working in such a community is an experience that nurtures, that heals the mind, body, and spirit. Indeed, Peace and Power values and practices are closely related to the tradition of women as healers.7

Like much of women’s wisdom, Peace and Power processes have been preserved primarily in oral tradition. The written word may endure in a concrete way, but is static and vulnerable to destruction. For centuries, women scholars have recorded women’s wisdom in written form, but much of that writing has not survived.8

The spoken word, on the other hand, while seeming to disappear once the words are spoken, endures within the heart and mind of listeners and speakers. The spoken word calls forth embodied response. Once spoken, words cannot be destroyed unless every person who has heard those words is destroyed. Oral communication is also interactive, as the speaker and the listener attend to the responses of one another. The act of speaking is an emergence, a creation and a form that gives rise to new acts, new thoughts, and new forms even as the speech occurs. The act of listening—hearing another’s words expressed—facilitates a co-creation and allows a fine-tuning of ideas that combines each person’s perceptions as words are shared.

Speaking in groups, and even the language we use, is crucial to the co-creating processes of Peace and Power. For the most part, language uses patriarchal words. In the attempt to reflect values and practices that are often found in the company of women, new words and new meanings are often created. When a listener does not comprehend these meanings, both actions and speaking are needed to make the new meanings clear. Fortunately, it is possible to convey the new meanings because, in a sense, they are not new at all. They are part of everyone’s experience, but have not had a language for expression. An example is the experience of peaceful, even

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7Diane Stein, All Women Are Healers: A Comprehensive Guide to Natural Healing (The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA, 1980.) While this book is primarily an exploration of the various paths to natural healing, Diane looks at women’s roles and contributions to healing. She weaves rich historical evidence with well informed speculation about the origins of healing as women’s art. For a detailed history of women as healers, see Jeanne Achterberg’s book Woman As Healer (Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1991).

8One of the most important books of this wave of feminism addressed the consistent and persistent erasure of women’s knowledge and women’s writing. In Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done To Them (Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), Dale Spender analyzes over three centuries of women’s writing. She concludes: “We are women producing knowledge which is often different from that produced by men, in a society controlled by men. If they like what we produce they will appropriate it, if they can use what we produce (even against us) they will take it, if they do not want to know, they will lose it. But rarely, if ever, will they treat it as they treat their own” (p. 9). For several years after its initial publication, this book was out of print and very difficult to find. It was briefly re-released by Pandora Press in 1988. However, once again it is out of print—a grim reminder of the enduring reality of Dale’s insights.
energizing disagreement. There is no word for this in American English, but the experience is known to most people.

In this book, you will find both old words with new meanings and new words created to more fully express meanings associated with Peace and Power processes. As a reader, you will not be able to observe actions that might enrich your comprehension. The stories that are included throughout the book will help to fill this void. Also, the book provides guidelines for thinking about and practicing new skills that are part of Peace and Power processes.

While this book offers guidelines, suggestions, and practices that have been tried successfully in many situations, it is neither comprehensive nor authoritative. Many groups have created practices to suit their own purposes. You might begin by using the practices described in this book, and gradually create practices that are consistent with your chosen values and with your circumstances. Even the smallest shift in practice will dramatically influence how a group functions. As you begin to create processes in your own time and space, you will create meanings that emerge from your own wisdom and experience. You can use Peace and Power as a handbook to inspire your own ways of living your values in work groups, voluntary community action groups, and even at home.

As you and your group consider using Peace and Power, it will be helpful for you to think about the following questions. These questions provide a background from which you may clarify your collective intentions to bring about fundamental change.9

Do we have solidarity of purpose? It is common for members of a group to have different ideas about the group’s purpose. Identifying a simple statement that reflects a common understanding of what you are all about is a good foundation for the work of Peace and Power.

Do we agree in principle that we seek to equalize the balance of power among everyone in the group? If people in the group can answer “yes” to this question, Peace and Power processes are for you—the processes are designed to do just this. It will be important to make this one of the principles of solidarity so that you can keep this ideal before you as you work together.

How independent are we of external hierarchical structures? The more your group is influenced by a hierarchical structure (for example, a school, corporation, or business), the more difficult it will be to fully enact Peace and Power processes. Doing this will not be impossible, but realize that you may have to make major adjustments. Chapter 12 helps to address some of the challenges you will face. If you are relatively independent of an external hierarchical structure (for example, a community activist group, spiritual commu-

9These questions were inspired by a discussion of group conditions that support consensus presented in Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision-Making by Michel Avery, Brian Auvine, Barbara Streibel, and Lonnie Weiss. This is an excellent detailed resource if your group is making weighty decisions by consensus.
nity, or intentional community), you will still be influenced by everyone’s habits in hierarchical ways of being. But you will be relatively free to create your own processes consistent with Peace and Power, and to challenge the traditions of hierarchy that individuals bring into the group.

Are we all committed to having time together? It is not possible to develop cohesiveness and solidarity in a community unless you spend time together. You may not be able to be together often, but you need to have some regular and agreed-on time to be together. Not everyone has to be present each time your group meets, but everyone needs to know when and where the group meets. Everyone also needs to make a commitment to be there as regularly as possible.

Are members of the group willing to attend to the group’s process? Peace and Power processes require taking time and turning attention to reflect on and discuss the group’s process. If you move to these processes, you will be doing much more than just taking care of business. Peace and Power assumes that the group is striving to bring values and actions into accord with one another. This is only possible if you take the time to discuss what is happening in the process, and together carefully consider if indeed your values and your actions match.

Do we seek foundational change in ourselves and in the world at large? Peace and Power processes are designed to create movement away from practices that alienate and oppress toward practices that nurture and empower. These ideals may seem appealing and easy to embrace in principle. However, chances are that you and members of your group have lifelong experience with groups that interact in ways that alienate and divide, in ways that sustain privilege for some and disadvantage for others. Making a change to act and interact in cooperative ways that build strong community challenges many practices that are habitual, and this requires new learning. If you use this process, be aware that you, along with everyone in your group, will be called upon to make significant personal changes.
If I believe so much must change, I must be willing to change myself.

- Francis Moore Lappé

Copper Woman warned Hai Nai Yu that the world would change and times might come when Knowing would not be the same as Doing. And she told her that Trying would always be very important.

- Anne Cameron

A few women, old now, and no longer strong. A few elder women who kept alive what the invader tried to destroy. Grandmothers and aunts. Mothers and sisters. Who must be honoured and cherished and protected even at risk of your own life. Who must be respected. At all times respected. Women who know that which we must try to learn again. Women who provide a nucleus on which we must build again. Women who will share with us if we ask them. Women who love us. And seeming candidates, who have been tested and found worthy, and who are learning the old wisdom. Young women who do not always manage to Do what they Know, and so need our love and help.

- Anne Cameron

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2Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman* (Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1981), p. 53. Through the ancient myths of the native women of Vancouver Island, Anne Cameron offers "a shining vision of womanhood, of how the spiritual and social power of women—though relentlessly challenged—can Endure and Survive." In her Preface, Cameron states: "From these few women, [the native women of Vancouver Island who told her the stories] with the help of a collective of women, to all other women, with love, and in Sisterhood, this leap of faith that the mistakes and abuse of the past need not continue. There is a better way of doing things. Some of us remember that better way." p. 7.
3Cameron, p. 63.
... reflection and action, imagining and doing, are closely connected. We cannot act what we have not in some way thought.

- Elise Boulding

Peace is both intent and process. The kind of Peace that this book is about requires conscious awareness of what happens in a group, in a community. Peace requires that you know what you do as an individual when you interact with others. Peace requires that you do what in your heart you know—that your chosen values guide your actions. Peace is the means and the end, the process and the product.

The ways of Peace are rooted in women's ancient wisdom. Much of that wisdom has been lost or obscured, but it can be found and reclaimed. In the face of modern stress, violence, and destruction, people can turn to women's ancient wisdom that reveals ways of peace, creativity, love, respect, nurturing, growth, healing.

The acronym that follows defines the idea of Peace as intent/process. Each letter of the word PEACE represents a commitment that guides the ways in which individuals can choose to relate to one another within the context of a group.

Praxis
Empowerment
Awareness
Cooperation
Evolution

PRAXIS

Praxis is thoughtful reflection and action that occur in synchrony, in the direction of transforming the world. Most people have a limited understanding of praxis because we live in a time when "knowing" and "doing" are rarely the same. In western cultures, the message "Do as I say, not as I do" is a familiar one. When you choose to convey the message that "I know what I do, and I do what I know," you begin to live your values. Praxis is values made visible through

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5Barbara Walker has contributed major works that examine women's ancient wisdom and the roles of female elders in the past. She draws on carefully researched material to bring her clearly focused insights to current events and circumstances. See particularly The Crone (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1985), The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (Harper and Row, New York, 1983), and The Skeptical Feminist: Discovering the Virgin, Mother, and Crone (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1987).
deliberate action. Your actions, chosen to reflect values of Peace and Power, become an ongoing cycle of constant renewal. As your actions are informed by your awareness of values, your thinking and your ideas are shaped and changed by your experiences with those actions.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment is growth of personal strength, power, and ability to enact one's own will and love for self in the context of love and respect for others. Empowerment is not self-indulgence, but rather a form of strength that comes from real solidarity with and among those who seek PEACE. Empowerment grows not from an individual quest for personal strength and influence, but from active engagement with others whose values you share. As Janice Raymond has shown, the profound experience of female friendship, formed in the cultural commitments that women make to their Selves and each other, is the grounding for women's personal and political empowerment. Empowerment requires listening inwardly to your own senses as well as listening intently and actively to others, consciously taking in and forming strength. Empowerment is not power over other people, other creatures, or the earth. In fact, empowerment is only possible when individuals express respect and reverence for all other forms of life and ground the energy of the Self as one with others and with the earth.

**Awareness**

Awareness is an active, growing knowledge of Self and others and the world in which you live. This means tuning into the moment. It also means a heightened, transcendent awareness that sees beyond the moment to the past and the future. The fundamental method of feminism is consciousness-raising, or seeing your world in a political and historical context. This is a vital transfiguration in a society that treats the knowing and experience of all minority and marginalized groups—and of women—as abnormal or non-existent. With awareness comes a consciousness of "double-speak," where what is defined as "normal" is really abnormal; where what is defined as "peace" is really war.

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7 Raymond, Janice: A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection (Boston, Beacon Press, 1986).


9 Awareness is a central theme of feminist literature. In The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory (The Crossing Press, 1983) Marilyn Frye explores a wide range of fundamental issues including oppression, sexism, and racism. In her essay entitled "Lesbian Feminism and the Gay Rights Movement: Another view of Male Supremacy, Another Separatism," she states: "One of the privileges of being normal and ordinary is a certain unconsciousness. When one is that which is taken as the norm in one's social environment, one does not have to think about it. . . . If one is marginal, one does not have the privilege of not noticing what one is. This absence of privilege is a presence of knowledge" (p. 146).
COOPERATION

Cooperation is an active commitment to group solidarity and group integrity. A group's commitment to cooperation grows out of mutually defined principles of solidarity, where each individual's viewpoint and abilities are equally valued. It means moving away from any action that exerts power over other individuals or groups. Rather, cooperation means encouraging everyone to use her or his abilities, ideas, and energy to join in creating a coordinated, cohesive whole. As individuals excel in a skill or ability, their achievement is celebrated by all and shared with others according to need and ability.10

EVOLVEMENT

Evolvement is a commitment to growth where change and transformation are conscious and deliberate. Evolvement can be likened to the cycles of the moon where new and old, life and death, and all phases are ultimately one. What remains constant is the cycle itself. As you experience group processes based on PEACE, you are changed. A group changes as circumstances shift, as individuals move in and out or become more or less involved, and as purposes or activities change. Growth and transformations are valued and celebrated with each new cycle.11 You create your realities as you live them. There can be no mistakes, no disasters—only opportunities for re-creation.

PEACE IS NOT . . .

- letting things slide for the sake of friendship
- doing whatever is required to keep on good terms
- criticizing people behind their backs
- being silent at a meeting only to rant and rave afterwards
- letting things drift if they don't affect you personally
- playing safe in order to avoid confrontation
- manipulating someone to avoid open conflict

10 For a fun look at how to teach children and those who are children at heart the ways of cooperation, read Everyone Wins: Cooperative Games and Activities. by S. Luvmour and J. Luvmour, New Social Publishers, 1990.
11 In Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), Mary Daly says: "Although friendship is not possible among all feminists, the work of Be-Friending can be shared by all, and all can benefit from the Metamorphosphoric activity. Be-Friending involves Weaving a context in which women can Realize our Self-Transforming, metapatterning participation in Be-ing. Therefore it implies the creation of an atmosphere in which women are enabled to be friends. Every woman who contributes to the creation of this atmosphere functions as a catalyst for the evolution of other women and for the forming and unfolding of genuine friendships" (p. 374).
coercing someone to do what you want
hearing distortions of truth without refuting them
indulging another's behavior when it is destructive
withholding information in order to protect someone else

Having Good Intentions Is Not Enough

Having the intent of Peace is critical when you enter a group interaction. However, intent is not enough. Actions that flow from intent are essential; actions are the critical test of intent. Examine how fully your actions flow with your intent by asking questions like these.

- Do I know what I do, and do I do what I know? (Praxis)
- Am I expressing my own will in the context of love and respect for others? (Empowerment)
- Am I fully aware of others, and myself, and do I bring these awarenesses to our discussions? (Awareness)
- Do I face conflicts openly and integrate differences in forming solutions? (Consensus)
- Do I welcome practices that encourage growth and change for others, the group, and myself? (Evolution)
CHAPTER

3

HOW WE GET THERE FROM HERE: POWER

This transition in our concept of power is radical. It involves seeing power not as a property we own, not as something we exert over others, but as a verb, a process we participate in. This is a huge evolutionary shift.

- Joanna Rogers Macy

The challenge for us in developing our personal power is our willingness to recognize that power is within us and in our courageous choice to forgive and release anything that prevents this power from fully manifesting.

- Diane Mariechild

We must build a new model of power that is defined as presence: presence of awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses, a deep respect for the SELF of me and therefore a respect for the SELF of others. We must journey toward the individual wholeness of each within the group structure. We must soften and/or relax the barrier between the intellect and the emotions so that the powerful and wonderful material of the unconscious becomes available to the individual and the group. We must be present to self and to others. Power in and of itself is neutral. We must take responsibility for our own actions and choose to know our own intent and the intent of any group before we simply follow a plan of action. Power-over demands that we do things we don't

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1 Notes from an Interview on "Womanpower" with Joanna Rogers Macy in Woman of Power, Spring, 1984, p. 12. Joanna Rogers Macy is co-founder of Interhelp, an international organization that provides workshops on "Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age." Bobbi Levi, who leads these workshops in Massachusetts, provided this interview for Woman of Power.

choose to do. Power-of-presence means we choose carefully and un-
derstand our intentions.

- Grace R. Rowan

Power is the energy from which action arises. The kind of power that ener-
gizes PEACE is different from power as it is used in the world at large. Power,
as it is used in the world at large, reflects a hierarchical ideal. Defined in hier-
archical cultures, power is the capacity to impose one’s will on others, accom-
panied by a willingness to apply negative sanctions against those who oppose
that will. This translates into a “love of power,” where the fact of having the
power becomes more important, more critical, than what that power is used for
or what results from the use of that power. Any measure that is necessary to
retain that power is considered justifiable. Further, individuals who are being
manipulated or controlled do not recognize these underlying dynamics be-
cause they are so thoroughly taught that the power structure, as it is set up, is
the “only way.” In this book, this type of power is called “Power-Over.”

The kind of power required to create and live PEACE reflects a feminist
ideal where the focus shifts to underlying values associated with the exercise
of power, and what happens when power is used. What is valued is the capac-
ity to be in harmony with others and with the earth, to join with others in di-
recting your collective energies toward a future you seek together. In this
book, this type of power is called “PEACE Power.”

In this chapter, you will see these two types of powers contrasted. These
are not the only types of powers that might be imagined. But they are both
very important to consider if your group is moving toward creating a balance
of power in your relations with one another. While PEACE powers are familiar,
you may not be accustomed to thinking of them as power because of what you
have experienced and learned in the traditions of the hierarchical power-over
model. The PEACE powers are familiar because they are so central in the pri-
vate world. They are not generally thought of as power because they are not
yet the predominant modes of action in the world at large—both public and
private. Even though the PEACE powers may seem idealistic when you read
about them, when they become visible through action, they create dramatic
changes. They become very real.

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described in this issue as “the co-founder of a shelter for battered women. She sees herself as a
woman with power, and uses this power in her practice as a psychologist and for healing. She is a
wise old woman on a journey to wholeness.”

4There are circumstances when exercising power over another person is clearly indicated, such as
action taken to save a child from getting hurt, or to halt one person who clearly intends to harm
another. However, power-over powers that are institutionalized as the only way, or the “good” way
to relate to others, are seldom indicated or justified.

5In this chapter, I continue to capitalize and cast in bold the letters of the word PEACE to em-
phasize this word as representing Praxis, Empowerment, Awareness, Consensus, and Evo-
lement—the intentions and processes required to create community.
The **PEACE** powers and power-over powers are not opposites, but they do contrast sharply. Power-over traits and practices are listed in the left-hand columns that follow. Features and practices of **PEACE** powers are in the columns on the right, with a focus on the values and processes through which they are translated into action.6

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6Charlene and I first published a model of patriarchal power and feminist alternatives in *Cassandra: Radical Feminist Nurses News Journal* May 1984, p. 10. This model is essentially the same model, but I have changed the labels to more clearly reflect what each tradition of power *does*, rather than using a label that is associated with the tradition from which it is thought to come. In initially developing these ideas, we used *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Marilyn Ferguson, Los Angeles, J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980) as a point of reference. Ferguson did not identify the prevailing power model as "patriarchal," but she did contrast the prevailing model with transforming power modes emerging in the latter part of the twentieth century. We borrowed a few of her labels for various forms of power, but where we did so we conceptualized them from our own feminist frame of reference.

When we were preparing the third edition of this book, Nancy Greenleaf provided the insights and suggestions that led to our inclusion of the patriarchal power of Accumulation, and the Feminist Alternative Power of Distribution. In a letter dated February 7, 1989, after reviewing a near-final draft of the manuscript, Nancy wrote: "I found myself wanting to add to your power model...something that addresses the power of the 'free market;' a godlike 'invisible hand' that sorts the worthy from the undeserving and assumes 'self-interest' as a primary motivational force. This notion of power is inextricably combined with patriarchal notions, but it specifically addresses material (economic) well being. The feminist alternative is the power that accrues through material sharing of food, land, or space, and the de-emphasis on privatization of property. The feminist alternative would mean a commitment to bear witness to and expose material inequality."

Charlene and I first named and described the feminist alternatives, now called the **PEACE** powers, from a wide range of feminist theory, as well as our own experiences working in feminist groups. See the bibliography at the end of this edition for a comprehensive list of the sources that influenced our early thinking, as well as more recent sources that have influenced the ongoing development of these ideas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power-over Powers</th>
<th>Peace Powers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Power of Results</strong> emphasizes programs, goals, or policies that achieve desired results. Achievement of the goals justifies the use of any means: &quot;I don't care how you do it, just get the job done.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>The Power of Process</strong> emphasizes a fresh perspective and freedom from rigid schedules. Goals, programs, and time-tables are used as tools, but are less important than the process itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Power of Prescription</strong> imposes change by authority; vested interests prescribe the outcome. The attitude is paternalistic: &quot;Do as I say, because I know what is best for you.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>The Power of Letting Go</strong> encourages change emerging out of awareness of collective integrity; leadership inspires a balance between the interests of each individual and the interests of the group as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Power of Division</strong> emphasizes centralization, resulting in the hoarding of knowledge and skills by the privileged few: &quot;What they don't know won't hurt them.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>The Power of the Whole</strong> values the flow of new ideas, images, and energy from all, nurturing mutual help networks that are both intimate and expansive. Practices that nurture group solidarity are regular habits of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Power of Force</strong> invests power for or against others and is accomplished by a willingness to impose penalties and negative sanctions. One individual makes decisions on behalf of another individual or group of individuals: &quot;Do it or else.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>The Power of Collectivity</strong> values the personal power of each individual as integral to the well-being of the group. A group decision in which each individual has participated is viewed as more viable than a decision made by any one individual and stronger than a decision made by a majority.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Power of Hierarchy</strong> requires a linear chain of command where layer upon layer of responsibilities are sub-divided into separate and discreet areas of responsibility: &quot;I don't make the decisions, I just work here.&quot; Or, &quot;The buck stops here.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>The Power of Solidarity</strong> shares the responsibility for decision-making and for acting upon those decisions in a lateral network. This process values thoughtful deliberation and emphasizes the integration of variety within the group, while calling forth fundamental values embraced by the whole.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Power-Over Powers

The Power of Command requires that leaders be aggressive and that followers be passive; leaders are assigned titles, status, and privilege (and higher pay!): “I will tell you what to do.” And, “Tell me what to do.”

The Power of Opposites polarizes issues. Individual preferences and insights are subsumed by the requirement to make choices “for or against.” Language reflects the values of good versus bad, right versus wrong: “If you aren’t with us, then you are against us.”

The Power of Use encourages the exploitation of resources and people as normal and acceptable: “If you don’t want to work for what we are willing to pay, then quit. There are plenty of people standing in line wanting this job.”

The Power of Accumulation views material goods, resources, and dollars as things to be used in one’s own self-interest, as well as items to gain privilege over others: “I worked for it, I bought it, I own it—and I deserve it.”

The Power of Causality relies on technology to conquer without regard for the consequences that might be carried over into the future. “Oh, the pill is causing you to retain fluid? Here, take another pill. This will make you lose fluid.”

Peace Powers

The Power of Sharing encourages leadership to shift according to talent, interest, ability, or skill; emphasizes the passing along of knowledge and skills in order that all may develop individual talent.

The Power of Integration views all aspects of a situation in context. In the process of enacting self-volition, the individual integrates self-love with love-for-others and acts with respect for each individual’s entitlement to self-volition.

The Power of Nurturing views life and experience as a resource to be cherished and respected. The earth and all creatures are viewed as precious, deserving of respect and protection, and integral to the well-being of all.

The Power of Distribution values material resources (including food, land, space, money) as items to use for the benefit of all, to share according to need. Material goods are valued as a means, not as an end in and of themselves.

The Power of Intuition senses which actions to take based on the perceived totality of human experience. While technology is considered to be a resource, it is not elected for its own sake or merely because it exists.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Power-Over Powers</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>Power of Expediency</strong> emphasizes the immediate reward or easiest solution. &quot;Oh, radio-active waste? Let's just ship it somewhere else or dump it in the sea.&quot;</td>
<td>The <strong>Power of Consciousness</strong> considers long-range outcomes and ethical behaviors. Ethics and morality are derived from values that protect life, growth, and peace, and that are the basis for confronting destructive actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>Power of Xenophobia</strong> (the fear of strangers) rewards conformity and acquiescing to the values of those who hold the balance of power. &quot;Be a team player. Don't make waves.&quot;</td>
<td>The <strong>Power of Diversity</strong> encourages creativity, values alternative views, and encourages flexibility. The expression of dissenting views is expected and encouraged. All points of view are integrated into decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>Power of Secrets</strong> relies on the mystification of the process, agents, and the chain of command. The agent who actually has the power rarely implements decisions or takes direct action, but assigns the dirty work to someone else: &quot;I'm just doing what I was told.&quot;</td>
<td>The <strong>Power of Responsibility</strong> focuses on demystification of processes and insists on naming and/or being the agent; open criticism and self-criticism is encouraged, motivated by love and protection for the individual and the group.</td>
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CHAPTER 4

DOING IT: MAKING THE COMMITMENT

Have you ever...

- been at a meeting in which two people argued most of the time and nothing was accomplished?
- been at a meeting in which you never heard what someone was trying to say because she kept getting interrupted?
- voted against a motion that passed, knowing that your concerns were serious but were never heard or addressed?
- left a meeting thinking that you were the only one who was dissatisfied?
- left a meeting and then found out in the hall afterward what was really going on?
- left a meeting thinking "There has got to be a better way"?

There is a better way. Peace and Power in action lead to consciously formed ways of working that can overcome frustrations arising from power imbalances. These processes are not a guarantee of totally satisfactory outcomes, nor are they automatic solutions to the dreadful meetings you may have experienced. In fact, the methods of Peace and Power, if used in a cookbook manner, will not bring about dramatic change. In order to shift to a better way, Peace and Power points the way for you and your group to actively create, shift, and explore ways to put your values into action.

Creating a better way begins with individuals who consciously choose values consistent with the PEACE values of Praxis, Empowerment, Awareness, Cooperation, and Evolve. At the same time, creating a better way means taking personal responsibility for making these values visible through action. You can use the methods of Peace and Power without thinking about why, and the processes will work to create some improvement over groups that have used power-over methods in the past. However, the processes will become transformative for each individual and the group when several individuals move toward the commitments described in this chapter.
The problems that happen in groups do not necessarily arise from evil or malicious intent. More often, problems arise from values people have learned from imbalanced power-over relations. When power-over values are translated into action, what typically happens is alienation, advantage for some and disadvantage for others, and individual dissatisfaction.

Throughout the remainder of this book, you will see the ideal of creating a new reality through actions based on the PEACE powers. The starting point is to own the value or values you want your actions to reflect, and to begin practicing actions that reflect those values. The next sections provide examples of specific actions and words you can practice to begin reflecting values of Peace and Power. As you read these suggestions, focus on your own thoughts, feelings, experiences, and what you would like to bring into your life. Think about what each of the PEACE powers would look like if you were to bring this kind of energy and influence to your interactions with others.

THE COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND POWER

A commitment to the **Power of Process** means:

**Actions**
- Giving yourself and everyone else in the group time to attend to a concern or issue that exists for any individual.
- Letting decisions emerge gradually, realizing that very few decisions are urgent.
- Inviting all persons in the group to express their ideas or concerns during the discussion.

**Words**
- Chullie has a concern that I need to think about—I will call her during the week to clarify before our meeting next week.
- I can wait to make this decision. How do others feel about waiting?
- Some people have not spoken about this issue yet. Do you have concerns that have not been heard by the group?

A commitment to the **Power of Letting Go** means:

**Actions**
- Acknowledging, but setting aside your own vested interests in order for others in the group to express their interests fully.

**Words**
- I would like to protect personal time and not meet on Sunday. But I am open to knowing how others feel about this issue.
• Supporting others who are new, or learning something new, in their work of taking on something you are already skilled at doing.

• Expressing your misgivings or concerns about a situation in the group, but letting the sense of the group prevail when the group needs to move on to something else.

• Michelle and I will be going over the bookkeeping system the hour before our next meeting. Would anyone else like to join us and begin to learn how to do this?

• I have shared my concern about the expense of this project, but I sense that the group is moving toward doing this. I trust the wisdom of the group and seek support in letting go of my fear.

A commitment to the **Power of the Whole** means:

**ACTIONS**

• Placing your own individual needs and interests within the context of the group.

• Seeking ways to do things together to equalize power within the group.

**WORDS**

• I like to work alone and late at night. I could make posters, balance the accounts, or update the mailing list.

• Nicole, how about updating the mailing list in your late night time? Making posters is a fun group project, and new members need to learn how to balance the accounts.

A commitment to the **Power of Collectivity** means:

**ACTIONS**

• Taking into account the interests of every member of the group, including those who are not present.

• Making sure that every concern is carefully integrated into every discussion and decision.

**WORDS**

• We will consider this decision tentative until the other group in California has also discussed this issue and voiced their perspectives on it.

• We have heard Jen’s concern about the expenses, and her sense that the group wants to go ahead with the project anyway. I think we should go ahead with the project, but also make a clear plan as to what we will do if the expenses start to mount beyond what we can handle.
A commitment to the **Power of Solidarity** means:

**Actions**
- Addressing conflict openly and constructively, and, in so doing, working actively to strengthen the integrity of the group.
- Keeping the group's principles of solidarity in conscious awareness as a basis for moving forward.
- Celebrating shared values and joys.

**Words**
- I am distressed because Janie and the publicity group have not explained their plan for this event. You always do a great job, but our not knowing mystifies this important process and we have agreed to demystify what happens here. I would like you to report the plan at our next meeting so that we can all understand and help out where we can.
- I appreciate that the group did not ignore my concern about the expenses and feel good about supporting this project because of your response.

A commitment to the **Power of Sharing** means:

**Actions**
- Taking responsibility for leadership and tasks, including things you enjoy doing and can do well, as well as things you would rather not do but that need to be done.
- Encouraging others to join in passing skills and tasks along by assuming tasks from others.

**Words**
- I will take responsibility for the clean-up after the concert. I would like four people who have not done this before to work with me because the requirements of the theater are important to learn. We need to maintain a positive relationship with them.
- Randy, you have had responsibility for the inventory for two years now. I am willing to learn how to do this and begin to assume responsibility in that area this year.
A commitment to the **Power of Integration** means:

**Actions**
- Listening actively and deliberately to every concern or idea that others bring to the group, and taking active steps to understand and act on others' points of view.
- Taking actions that encourage bringing things together, rather than polarizing them into opposing points of view.

**Words**
- Suzette, what I hear you saying is that you are losing faith in our ability to complete this project because we seem so scattered. Is this an accurate summary of your concern?
- Since everyone can't be here at any time we have suggested for our regular meetings, how about if we alternate between morning meetings and evening meetings?

A commitment to the **Power of Nurturing** means:

**Actions**
- Treating others in ways that convey love and respect.
- Acknowledging that each individual's experience has uniquely qualified her to be where she is at the present.
- Affirming and rejoicing in the knowledge that each person in the group has power to use, and power to choose how to use it.
- Using critical reflection (see Chapter 10) to bring forth the best for every individual and the group.

**Words**
- Pauli, I deeply admire the strength that you have shown in the face of this difficulty. Thank you.
- June, I haven't faced the kinds of discrimination you have. It must tax your persistence and patience to keep trying to help us understand. Just know that when I seem resistant, at the same time I truly seek to know and understand.
- Chris, I am sad to see you leave the group, but at the same time I am happy for your clarity in making such a difficult choice.
- I am concerned about the quality of the presentation we are planning. We agree that our message needs to be clear and appealing, so I would like to openly discuss how we can improve what we have planned so far.
A commitment to the Power of Distribution means:

**Actions**
- Taking actions to overcome imbalances in personal material resources among group members.
- Using resources that are available to the group as a means, not an end.
- Working to make resources that are available to the group accessible to all based on need, in the interest of the development of the group and each individual.

**Words**
- Jan, Leslie, and I are able and willing to drive our cars and cover this expense so that all twelve of us can go to the retreat.
- Linda is willing to help us out of this tax mess at no charge. Rather than filing taxes for us, let’s have her teach at least four of us to do what needs to be done.
- We have $200 in grant money to cover travel to do the interviews. How can we use the money to make sure that everyone who wants to participate can do so?

A commitment to the Power of Intuition means:

**Actions**
- Taking the time to think, feel, and experience the fullness of a situation.
- Taking actions that seem risky when your instinct tells you to go ahead.
- Paying attention to the intuition of others and taking their sense of things seriously.

**Words**
- I have been quiet for the past hour, reflecting on my growing sense that we need to go ahead with this. I am not sure why or how yet . . .
- I know this is a dangerous time to travel in that part of the world. I just feel that we need to participate in this project.
- Dallas, you are so clear about this even though the rest of us can’t quite understand. I think we need to pay attention to your intuition about going ahead.
A commitment to the **Power of Consciousness** means:

**Actions**
- Talking about the values on which you are building your actions so that everyone can be fully aware of your intentions.
- Exploring with others awareness of feelings, situations, responses, and meanings in your experiences.

**Words**
- I am sharing with everyone all the details about how this works so that everyone can participate to the extent that you are willing and able.
- I am beginning to see a pattern in how we respond to folks who represent the funding agencies. I would like to put this on the agenda for our next meeting, and I will prepare some ideas and questions for discussion.

A commitment to the **Power of Diversity** means:

**Actions**
- Carefully considering another point of view when your immediate response is to reject it.
- Taking deliberate actions to keep yourself and the group open to creating accessibility for others who are different or new.
- Paying attention to subtle assumptions that may not hold true for everyone in the group.

**Words**
- Wait a minute! I know I just said I don't agree, but maybe I am missing something here. Ann, tell us more about what you are thinking.
- Before we move on, I want to back up because I think that new people are probably confused by what just happened. Would it help for us to explain more about what we just did?
- I am becoming aware that we have assumed everyone has a partner to bring to the party. How can we make sure that people who are alone feel welcome and comfortable?
A commitment to the *Power of Responsibility* means:

**Actions**
- Keeping everyone in the group fully informed about anything in your personal life that might affect the group as a whole.
- Acting to make sure that nothing is mystified, that everything that concerns the group is equally accessible to every member.
- Actively checking in and closing in a spirit of contributing to the growth and development of the group.

**Words**
- As many of you know, I am dealing with a difficult decision about my future, and I know this distracts me from time to time. Know that I welcome anyone bringing me back to the group if you notice that I seem to have mentally wandered away.
- The theater has strict policies to meet their safety standards. I have prepared a chart that shows everyone what their standards are, and the things we have to do to meet them.
- **Check-in:** I am Peggy. I have just left a difficult meeting at work, but am ready and eager for our discussion. I would like to make sure we discuss the poster design on the agenda tonight.
- **Closing:** I appreciate Monica’s explanation of the theater requirements—that was very helpful to me in understanding why we have to do some of this stuff. Along the same line, I am still confused about the finances, and would like Ann and the finance group to give us more information about that next week. For my affirmation tonight—I believe in myself and our group.
Chapter 5

Principles of Solidarity: Foundations for Building Community

...Imagine how it feels to always belong—belong in a diversified community, for it is the diversity in nature that gives the web of life its strength and cohesion. Imagine a time when everyone welcomes diversity in people because they know that is what gives community its richness, its strength, its cohesion. Imagine being able to relax into our connectedness into a web of mutually supportive relations with each other and with nature. ... Imagine a world where there was collective support in the overcoming of individual limitations, where mistakes weren’t hidden but welcomed as opportunities to learn, where there was no reason to withhold information, where honesty was a given. Imagine a world where what is valued most is not power but nurturance, where the aim has changed from being in control to caring and being cared for, where the expression of love is commonplace.

... The very fact that you can imagine these things makes them real, makes them possible.

- Margo Adair

Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together, so great is the wealth of experience, cultures, and ideas we have to share with one another. We can be sisters united by shared interests and be-

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1Margo Adair, Working Inside Out: Tools for Change. Berkeley, Wingbow Press, 1984, p. 284. This is a powerful, healing book that provides useful tools for bringing together the personal, spiritual, and political aspects of our lives, individually and collectively.
beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.

—bell hooks

Communities are defined by the values, concerns, or purposes that the individuals within them share. The phrase “global community” encompasses all who live on the planet earth and implies a general concern about the interactive global environment, economies, and politics. When groups of people within a community interact on more personal levels, the values, concerns, and purposes that bring them together are more explicit, and also more challenging. Individuals begin to experience firsthand what it takes to reconcile their personal preferences and desires with the preferences and desires of others in the group. Groups that create cohesiveness and that can identify what it is that brings them together as a group are a community—meaning that, whatever their numbers, they share certain values, concerns, or purposes.

Building communities for the future calls for a shift that values both cohesiveness and diversity. Putting these values into action brings forth solidarity. This means that people come together knowing that they will disagree, have different opinions, and see things differently from one another. Rather than seeking to agree, or pretending to be unified with one another, everyone acknowledges that which divides, or could divide, and works actively to overcome fears, prejudices, stereotypes, resentments, and negative forms of competitiveness. Through processes that overcome fears of differences, the group also works to understand all points of view, to respect one another without coercion to change, and to find genuine common ground that sustains the group as a whole.

Common ground can be formally expressed in principles of solidarity. Formal principles make your individual and group values explicit, and help to guide the actions that flow from those values. Principles of solidarity provide a bridge between that which brings a group together and that which distinguishes each individual within the group. Principles of solidarity provide a grounding from which the group can focus their energies, the ideals toward which the group builds, a guide around which to integrate all individual perspectives in forming decisions, a basis for giving one another growthful criticism, and a foundation for transforming diversity into group strength.

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[Note: The text includes footnotes, which are not repeated here.]

2 bell hooks, in her classic _Feminist Theory: from margin to center_ (Boston: South End Press, 1984) discusses the experience and rhetoric surrounding the ideas of unity, support, sisterhood, and solidarity in the white women’s movement in her chapter entitled “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women.” I have selected the term solidarity in this edition to replace unity (used in previous editions) because of the connotation implied in the concept of solidarity: that we come together with our differences intact, respected, and integrated into a greater whole.

3 Competitiveness that inspires fine performance and nurtures mutual respect and admiration for one another’s accomplishments can be a strength within a group. However, when competitiveness nurtures jealousy, resentment, envy, rage, and hatred, the group is experiencing negative dynamics that are harmful.
Principles of solidarity are statements of mutually shared beliefs and agreements that are formed early in the group’s experience together. Although writing them down is important, they are alive—they change and grow as the group changes and grows.

Principles of solidarity are the basis for each part of the group’s ongoing process. They also provide an introduction and orientation to individuals who are considering becoming a part of the group. New members may contribute valuable perspectives that can lead to shifts and changes in the Principles, but the Principles also form a grounding for stability within the group as membership changes.

The written document that contains the principles of solidarity is kept before the group; each member has a copy and works with it constantly. The document is particularly important as a source for forming constructive criticism (see Chapter 9), and when the group is addressing conflict (see Chapter 10). When each member’s copy is almost not readable from the penciled-in changes that emerge over time, it is time to consider making a fresh copy!

**Building Principles of Solidarity**

Building principles of solidarity begins with everyone sharing ideas about the group, what interests them in being part of the group, and what they expect from the group. Each perspective is expressed as fully as possible. Then the group begins to identify those ideas around which there is common ground, and those ideas that represent diversity from which to build common understandings.

Ideally, the group forms principles of solidarity in the first few gatherings. For an existing group that chooses to begin using Peace and Power processes, the decision to shift to this way of working together is the first step in forming principles of solidarity, and that decision becomes one of the Principles.

The time invested to form new principles of solidarity or to re-examine existing principles of solidarity is the most valuable time spent in group work. Usually a task-oriented group that will meet regularly for a year or more requires two or three gatherings to form a beginning set of principles of solidarity, and regular times set aside after that to re-evaluate those principles.

A group needs to consider at least seven components in forming principles of solidarity. Each component becomes a section of the written document, but the specific principles will vary according to the needs and purposes of each group.

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4Kathleen MacPherson first identified four components around which the Menopause Collective formed their principles of solidarity. Her experience is related in her doctoral dissertation, completed in 1986 at Brandeis University, entitled “Feminist Praxis in the Making: The Menopause Collective.” These Peace and Power components draw on Kathleen’s ideas, as well as the ideas and experience of the Friendship Collective, who worked extensively to develop principles of solidarity.
Who Are We?
The name of a group implies a great deal about the group. You may need to define some words in your name to be clear about your identity. For example, the word *radical* in a group's name might be defined as "fundamental; going to the root." The definitions clarify who you are and who you want to be.

The group may also need to agree who the individuals within the group are or will be in the future. For example, a group formed to create and maintain a women's center in the community may deliberately seek participation from a broad base of women in the community, including women of color, women of all sexual preferences, women of differing economic classes, etc. A group that is working on the rights of lesbian mothers may actively seek the participation of non-lesbian mothers and also lesbians who are not mothers.

An important dimension of defining membership is clarifying how open the group is to integrating new members and when and how this will happen. A group formed to accomplish a specific, detailed, and long-term task may need to initially limit membership to a few persons who are able and willing to remain dedicated to the accomplishment of the task. While many groups will choose not to be "closed" in relation to membership, there may be times when the group needs stability in the membership, and the group might be open to new members only once or twice a year. Making a specific agreement about how long group membership will remain stable is helpful in preventing misunderstandings within the group, and in communicating with others who are not group members.

What Are Our Purposes?
Defining who the group is provides a start in identifying the group's purposes. A woman's center group may have the immediate purpose of finding a space, but then they need to identify the purposes for which that space will exist and how it will be used. If one purpose is to provide shelter for battered women, there are additional concerns to be addressed in relation to this purpose, such as whether or not to offer counseling, economic, legal, or educational services as well.

Consider your group's purposes in light of what is realistic. The members of a battered women's support group may want to see the group offer a full range of services to women and their children. However, the resources of the group may be such that the initial purpose needs to be limited to fund-raising and educational work. Being clear at the outset about the limits of their purpose can help the group to use their resources and energies in productive ways, rather than in working at cross-purposes.

In each of the following sections, the examples of principles of solidarity are from the Friendship Collective, whose purpose was to study the experience of female friendship among nurses.\(^5\)

What Beliefs and Values Do We Share Around Our Purpose?

Whatever the group defines as its purpose will direct the group toward exploring various values and beliefs related to that purpose. Certain values are fundamental to Peace and Power processes; stating these values is important in helping each member of the group grow in understanding the meaning of these values. Having the beliefs and values stated provides a way for the group to examine how the values create changes in actions and group interactions.

The beliefs and values that formed principles of solidarity for the Friendship Collective are presented here:

- We believe that friendships among women are fundamental to female survival and growth.
- We value all forms of friendship between women.
- We value our own friendships among ourselves and are committed to living our friendship with deliberate awareness, examining and creating our experience as we go.

What Individual Circumstances or Personal Values Do We Need to Consider As We Work Together?

Consider personal values of all the individuals who are in the group. Different circumstances create different expectations and commitments. Different personal circumstances and experiences also influence what individuals need from a group to feel safe to speak, to act, and to Be.

Women who are single parents or who care for older adults may need careful limits on time and other personal resources. Women who have been verbally abused may need an agreement from group members that people will be careful about how loudly they speak, and take care not to use sarcastic or assaultive voice tones. A person in a wheelchair not only needs space that is accessible, but also needs the group’s awareness of the particular fears and challenges faced by someone in a wheelchair. A person who suffers from fat oppression may not need specific physical arrangements, but needs the group’s awareness of the discriminations she experiences and how the group can overcome these. Any person who is a minority within a group, whether based on race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, or education, needs recognition and valuing of these differences. Once the group has openly explored the range of personal circumstances of each person’s life related to the group’s work, then the group can agree on a common set of expectations that everyone values.

The principles of solidarity formed by the Friendship Collective grew out of personal circumstances and individual values, and are presented here.
• We will not intentionally take any action individually or collectively that exploits any individual within the group or any other women, particularly exploitation that could arise from our roles as teachers or students.
• We will keep at a minimum any financial expenses needed from any individual in relation to our work, and will openly negotiate these demands as they occur.
• We will be conscious of helping one another maintain a balance between the demands of our group work and our personal lives.
• We will maintain careful time limits for our gatherings that each member of the group mutually agrees upon at each gathering.

What Do We Expect of Every Member?
Time, energy, and commitment expectations can take many different forms. For example, group members might be expected to attend a monthly meeting and contribute to the work of a task group that meets for about three hours each week. For another group, members might be expected to attend a yearly meeting and work on one project of choice during the year. Large groups that do not meet together but join in a network to promote communication might simply expect that every member contribute financially to the network, with the work of specific tasks done by smaller groups as they volunteer to assume a specific responsibility.

Bring to conscious awareness ways in which you expect each member to interact within the group. You have probably entered groups with an unspoken ideal or hope that everyone will be “open and honest.” In reality, most typical groups have hidden agendas and mystified processes. Making expectations clear is one step in the direction of nurturing openness and honesty.

Principles of solidarity that grew out of the Friendship Collective’s expectations for interactions include the following:

• We will meet once a week until the initial stage of the project is planned. After that we will re-negotiate the frequency of our meetings.
• We will take time to relax and play together.
• We are committed to using Peace and Power processes, including building value-based decisions and learning to provide constructive, growthful criticism for one another.
• We will address conflicts, feelings, and issues openly as soon as they reach our awareness, with the understanding that early awareness may not be perfect but deserves expression.
• We will share skills, leadership, and responsibility within the group according to ability and willingness, and will work to nurture these abilities in each of us so that we share them as fully as possible.
• We welcome any individual assuming specific tasks that need to be done that grow out of our mutually agreed direction, and support her initiative in doing so. We expect that each of us will keep every other member of the group fully informed as to the progress of her activities related to the group’s work.
What Message Do We Wish to Convey to the World Outside Our Group?

Every group conveys a message to the rest of the world about who they are and what they are all about. Sometimes the message is accurate, other times it is not. The group using Peace and Power forms their message with careful and deliberate intent, and constantly examines the ways in which it is conveying that message. The message that the group seeks is always consistent with what the group believes and values, but there are still choices to be made in relation to that message.

For example, a group that exists to develop services for battered women may decide to form a message that emphasizes women as physically strong, powerful, and resourceful. Another component of that message might be that women help other women, providing support and assistance in a variety of ways. These two messages become central in considering ways in which members of the group interact outside the group. These messages would grow out of the beliefs the group has about women in general, and also beliefs about women who are battered.

Principles of solidarity that the Friendship Collective formed in relation to their message include the following.

- We will work to form a message that is consistent with what we believe about female friendship and about feminist praxis.
- All public presentations will reflect our cooperative, feminist style of working, and will reflect our commitment to share skills, leadership, and responsibility.
- We will carefully and constructively criticize each public presentation or written document to examine the message we think we actually conveyed, and to re-form our own commitments and our presentation style as needed to more closely convey the message that we intend.

How Will We Protect the Integrity of Our Group?

Groups often encounter demands for time and attention from outside the group, particularly when their work creates social change. These demands may place unrealistic burdens on the group, and they may not always be consistent with the direction that the group wishes to take. Conscious awareness and anticipation of these possibilities help a group to develop agreements that can guide responses to outside demands. For example, a group that has been successful at fund-raising might be asked to share their experience and knowledge with another new group in the community. If this happens once, it would not be a burden. But if it happens often, the group’s energy could be drained responding to these requests.

Principles of solidarity formed by the Friendship Collective to protect group integrity include the following:
• All requests of our group will be discussed in a gathering with all of us present, and all decisions made regarding outside demands will be made by consensus of the group.

• Decisions about outside requests will be informed by a primary concern for the protection of each of us individually, our primary commitment to the work of our group, and our readiness to respond to the request.

• We will maintain our commitment to feminist praxis and to feminist methods in our work, and will carefully examine all situations that might result in an erosion of this commitment.

• We will seek external funding for our work, but will examine the demands placed on us in relation to accepting funding to assure that whatever demands these are, they do not compromise our primary principles.
Peace and Power gatherings:

- give every perspective full voice.
- demystify all processes and structures.
- fully respect different points of view and integrate these into the whole.
- include attention to the process itself so that how you do things is just as important as what you do.
- rotate and share leadership according to ability and willingness.
- value learning new skills so that the opportunity to do so is accessible to all.
- share responsibility for the processes of the group equally among everyone present.

Peace and Power processes are alternatives to traditional ways of conducting group meetings. Moving toward PEACE processes helps everyone understand Peace and Power ideals. You see and experience the values in action. When you are not sure if your values and actions are in harmony, you can stop and take a few minutes to discuss why you are doing something.

This chapter provides an overview of how a gathering can be conducted using Peace and Power processes. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 describe the major processes in more detail. Your group can form any number of ways to approach gatherings, and can even use some of the traditional ways of conducting your business. The underlying concern is to work together in ways that express your values.

OVERVIEW

The processes described in this chapter are approaches to conducting a meeting that have evolved over time, in groups committed to the values of Peace and Power. The basic processes are well-suited to groups of six to 40
participants. Smaller groups tend to work in less formal ways than those described here. Larger groups need to adapt these processes, using smaller "break-out" sessions for some parts of the meeting, combined with large-group discussions and reports from smaller groups.

Groups sit in a circle so that everyone has eye contact. Usually one individual, the convener, comes to a gathering with an agenda that provides structure for the gathering. This responsibility rotates among group members at regular times, such as every gathering or every month. The process for each gathering has several distinct components that encourage each individual to put Peace and Power values into practice.

The convener opens the gathering by beginning check-in, when each person becomes fully present in mind, body, and spirit. Check-in is a time for each individual to focus awareness on the purposes of the gathering, to share with the group any circumstances that might influence participation in the process, and to bring to the group intentions, expectations, or hopes for the gathering.

Following check-in, the convener draws attention to the agenda and begins the process of rotating chair (see Chapter 7). Rotating chair is a mutually shared responsibility for facilitating group interactions. The "chair" is the speaker. The primary purpose of rotating chair is to promote every viewpoint being heard, with each person's unique contribution being valued and necessary.

Group decisions are reached using value-based decision-building processes (see Chapter 8). Value-based decision building focuses on reaching a conclusion that is consistent with the group's principles of solidarity, and that takes into account all viewpoints and possibilities. Value-based decision-building focuses on what each individual and the group as a whole gains by the nature of the decision that is reached.

The final component is closing, which is a deliberate process to end a gathering or discussion, and at the same time, begin movement toward the next stage of the group's process (see Chapter 9). During closing, each person shares appreciation for something that has happened during the process of the gathering, critical reflection leading toward growth and change, and an affirmation that expresses a personal commitment for moving into the future.

**THE CONVENER**

The one individual who comes to a gathering with a specifically defined role is the convener. This role rotates so that each person in the group develops leadership skills. The convener’s primary responsibilities are to prepare the

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1In *Pure Lust* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), Mary Daly states: "First of all, Gnomic Nags should note that Real Presence implies being presentient—feeling or perceiving beforehand. . . . When women are Present to our Selves, . . . to be presentient is to be animated with hope. This presentient Presence is Positively Powerful, for it implies our capacity to presentiate, that is 'to make or render present in place or time; to cause to be perceived or realized as present' (O.E.D.I). Real Presence of the Self, then, which is participation in Powers of Be-ing, implies powers to Realize as present our past and future Selves." (p. 147-148).
agenda for the gathering, to begin check-in, and, in some types of gatherings, to present a SOPHIA to focus discussion (described later in this chapter). During the gathering, the convener assumes a leadership role, facilitating attention to the mutually agreed upon agenda. The convener actively listens to the discussion and calls for shifts in the process to facilitate staying focused on the group's purposes for this gathering. For example, when the convener notices that some people have not had an opportunity to speak, she might request a circling process (see Chapter 7) to give everyone a chance to speak. Or, when she senses that all viewpoints have been heard, she begins the process of value-based decision building (see Chapter 8).

The agenda can be written on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper (shelf liner or freezer wrap will do!) and posted before the time the gathering is scheduled to begin. The convener also identifies announcements or items that need to be mentioned without discussion and presents these just after check-in.

Other members of the group can assume leadership roles at any time, but the convener remains particularly attentive to group movement. This does not mean that the convener behaves like the traditional “Chairman of the Bored”—calling time limits, reminding people to use rotating chair, or calling on people to speak. Once the discussion begins, the convener is free to participate in the discussion using the process of rotating chair (see Chapter 7), just as any other member of the group. Members of the group can assume leadership at any time.

The convener's unique responsibility is to make conscious choices to provide leadership and to come to the gathering prepared to do so. Providing leadership that is focused on group process is illustrated in the following ways:

- Letting the group know when agreed-on time limits are near.
- Remaining conscious of requests made by individuals for shifts in the agenda, tasks, or processes, and making sure these are integrated.
- Helping the group to be aware of alternative possibilities throughout the discussion, such as minority viewpoints that have not received full attention, hearing from people who have not spoken to an issue, or choices that have not been considered by the group.
- Suggesting group processes that can move the group along, such as calling for “circling” or “sparkling.”
- Remaining attentive to possibilities for decision building, and providing leadership for the group to do so.
- Shifting the focus of the discussion to closing so that the group has the time they agreed upon for this part of the process.

Conveners may use these guidelines in thinking about and planning for gatherings.

**Review the notes from the last gathering.**
- Are there items from other gatherings that need to be addressed or items that the group decided to carry over to the next gathering for discussion?
- Does the group need any new resources or information related to issues brought forward from the last gathering?
• Has anything happened that will affect the decisions made at the last gathering?

Review group process.
• What individual concerns or needs have people expressed that should be considered in planning for this gathering?
• What group issues have people identified that need to be considered in planning for this gathering?
• What strengths does the group possess that need to be sustained and supported during this gathering?

Plan the agenda.
• What announcements need to be shared?
• Are there special time considerations or individual needs to be taken into account?
• What new items need to be introduced?
• What specific tasks or responsibilities need to be completed before the gathering?

SOPHIA

In groups where discussion is a primary focus, a SOPHIA can be prepared by the convener in advance of the gathering, and presented after check-in and after the group has agreed to the revised agenda for the gathering. A SOPHIA is a five- to ten-minute verbal essay that comes from the speaker's own inner wisdom. Sophia is a Greek word for female wisdom; Sophia was wisdom in ancient western theologies. In the context of discussion groups, a SOPHIA means:

Speak
Out,
Play
Havoc,
Imagine
Alternatives

A SOPHIA is intended to focus the group's attention on the topic of discussion. A SOPHIA is particularly useful in a classroom setting, a book discussion group, when a group is facing an important decision, or when a group is in a muddle about principles of solidarity. If the group has shared readings in advance of the discussion, the SOPHIA draws on those readings, but brings the

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perspective of the speaker to interpret possible meanings of the readings for individuals and the group. An important purpose of a SOPHIA is to raise questions for all to consider. The questions are also called subjectives (not traditional objectives). Subjectives are critical questions that arise from varying perspectives on the issue under consideration. There are no "answers" to subjectives; rather, there are many possible responses, all of which will be respectfully considered in the discussion. The SOPHIA, and the subjectives that it contains, offers to the group many possibilities to consider.

CHECKING IN

Check-in is a brief statement by each individual that centers the attention of the group on the shared purpose for being together. By sharing intentions for the gathering, everyone present can integrate these into the whole of the gathering. Once this is done, there are no hidden agendas. At the end of check-in, everyone knows what needs to be on the agenda before the discussion starts, what the priorities are for the group and for individuals, and what the overall focus of the meeting needs to be.

Check-in includes the following activities.

- Calling your name as a symbolic gesture of placing your Self into the circle, fully present in mind, body, and spirit.
- Sharing circumstances or events that are likely to influence your participation during the discussions.
- Reflecting briefly on what you integrated or gained from the last gathering.
- Saying what you are prepared to contribute to the group interaction and your intentions for the gathering.

Check-in usually opens the gathering to assure that concerns of everyone present are fully considered throughout the group time. Enough time needs to be provided so that each individual speaks, but each person only speaks for a brief time (about three to ten seconds) so that everyone's presence is acknowledged before any discussion begins. Check-in is initiated by the convener and is an indication to all that the gathering has begun.

If you are joining an established group, check-in might feel intimidating. A lifetime of hierarchical group processes creates doubts about speaking openly in a group. Until you feel comfortable in a group you may only wish to share who you are and your purpose for being present.

One purpose for checking in is to address your own ability or limits in participating during the gathering. If you are not sure how fully present you are able to be, you might say, "I am distracted tonight, but I want to hear the discussion and participate as much as possible." You may choose to provide some details that will facilitate the group's understanding, such as "My dog got out of the yard today and I have not found her. I do have friends
searching, and it is important to me to be here and help plan the opening of the Center. I will leave at some point to call home and check on things, but I want to stay present as much as I can." It is important to say something about what you hope for by being present. Knowing the circumstances that are influencing your ability to attend to the work of the group, and what you are working for on behalf of the group, the group can respond in a supportive and caring way.

Here is an example of how to share your reflections on a previous gathering to acknowledge what has happened, without imposing on others’ time for checking in. Suppose that during closing at the end of the last gathering, comments were shared about Sally’s constructive way of responding to another person. Sue reflected on the constructive approach that Sally used and practiced the approach at home. During check-in, Sue says: "I want everyone to know how helpful Sally’s approach to planning at our last meeting was for me this past week. My family was facing a similar dilemma, and I used Sally’s approach to deal with the issue. It turned out great!" By Sue’s sharing this experience of her own growth, the group can better appreciate the far-reaching influences of their collective actions.

While every individual’s check-in differs in extent and detail, it is vital for everyone to share their intention for each gathering. Silence during check-in leaves others wondering what you are thinking, and leaves room for doubts about your intents. Silence at this time interferes with creating solidarity within the group. If you can’t participate with a spirit of owning your part of responsibility for the group process, then perhaps it is time to check out of the group.

**Responding to Check-In.** Check-in does not occur in a vacuum. The group briefly focuses energy, time, and attention to what individuals share. When a person shares exciting good news, let your congratulations and shared joy erupt! When a person is preoccupied with some circumstance that may interfere with her participation ("My dog is lost"), the group may ask, "How can we best respond right now?" to find out what the person needs from the group. If someone shares a dramatic and important event—such as the death of a friend—the group may wish to suspend the agenda entirely or alter the agenda in some way in order to be fully responsive to the tragedy.

**CHECK-OUT**

There are at least two types of check-out. First, if you are not able to participate in the gathering in an active way, it is wise to check out entirely, either from this gathering or from the group altogether. Sleeping or reading a book during a gathering does not constitute being present or participating!

Another kind of check-out occurs when you are present and committed to the group, but you have specific limits on your time and energy for this particular gathering. If you come to a gathering and have to leave before closing, then explain your situation during check-in and give the time frame you are committed
to. As the time nears, request the chair and share any closing comments. Give the group time to attend to your concerns, unfinished business, or to make plans for finishing something in which you might be involved.

For example, a gathering has been scheduled to end at 10:00 p.m. Neva wants to leave the meeting at 9:00 p.m. because she is taking an exam the next morning and needs to get a good night of rest. Neva has been involved in planning for a concert that the group is sponsoring and wants to be present for that discussion. She shares her circumstance with the group and requests that the discussion about the concert be placed earlier than planned on the agenda so that she can be present for it. The group agrees to this priority and the gathering proceeds. As 9:00 p.m. draws near, Neva requests the chair and shares with the group that she is concerned that there are still some loose ends related to the concert. The group shifts attention to Neva’s comments, wraps up the loose ends, and wishes her the best on her exam.
Rotating leadership and responsibility

- assures that every perspective is given full consideration.
- equalizes and balances power within the group.
- assures the passing along of skills and knowledge to all who are willing and able.
- nurtures everyone’s unique talents.
- challenges everyone to grow in the ability to speak, and to do things that might not otherwise be attempted.
- demystifies the processes of the group.
- provides practice and experience to meet challenges outside the group.

Rotating leadership happens in many ways, and is truly a process of “turning it over.” Using practices that rotate leadership and responsibility turns upside-down the long-accepted custom of hierarchical structures: a linear chain of command where a single individual or an elite group manages the group, and assumes leadership and control. Rotating leadership and responsibility turns over to each member of the group the rights and responsibilities for leadership, tasks, and decisions.

Processes of rotating leadership may initially seem awkward, cumbersome, and inefficient. The benefits are not always immediately perceptible; they are benefits that emerge over time. For example, it may only be when a conflict arises in the group that the benefit of having everyone acquire skills of leadership and critical reflection becomes apparent. Once you experience processes of rotating leadership, and begin to experience the benefits in the context of a group with mutual intent and commitment to the values of Peace and Power processes, fears and reservations about the process gradually disappear. In fact, it becomes excruciating to try to endure the old ways when you have to go back and deal with the hierarchically organized world.
Rotating Chair: Processes for Discussion

Rotating chair is a mutually shared responsibility for group participation and interaction. Whoever is speaking is the chair. Following check-in, the convener focuses on any announcements. The group then reviews the agenda and identifies any items that need to be included that are not on the agenda, or reorders the agenda based on what people shared during check-in. If anyone has a brief item that simply consists of information sharing, this is a good time to do so. The group may set time limits and priorities on the agenda items.

In discussion groups, the convener then shares a SOPHIA. The subjectives (questions) at the end of a SOPHIA often spark discussion. In task-oriented groups, the convener focuses the group’s attention on the first item of business. Then the chair rotates to whomever wishes to speak and discussion begins. The chair continues to rotate to members of the group who wish to speak.

Once the discussion begins, you express your desire to speak by raising your hand. The person who is speaking is responsible for passing the chair to the next speaker. You pass the chair by calling the name of the person you are recognizing. If more than one person wants to speak, pass the chair to the person who has not spoken or who has not spoken recently—not the person who raised the first hand!

Passing the chair by calling a person’s name is an important tool for a large group to help everyone learn everyone’s name. In any sized group, it is a symbolic gesture that signifies honoring each individual’s identity and respecting the presence of each person. Calling the next speaker’s name is also a clear signal that you have finished speaking, and that you are indeed passing the chair along.

You are not obligated to pass the chair to someone else until you have finished the ideas and thoughts you wish to share. At the same time, you have the responsibility to make way for all who are present to speak to each issue. Avoid making long, repetitive, or unrelated comments that prevent access to the chair for other people. If you tend to ramble and notice that others are not having time to speak, organize your thoughts and ideas in a journal and practice speaking in conversation outside the group. Then ask the group to give you specific feedback about how you are doing.

During the discussion, make notes of your own thoughts and ideas about what others are saying. Listen carefully to people who are speaking, allowing them time to complete their thoughts before you indicate your desire to speak. Frantically waving your hand in eagerness to share your thought is just as distracting and disrespectful as verbally interrupting.

At first, raising your hand can make you feel as if you have gone back to kindergarten. The benefits, however, soon become apparent. You can be confident that you will have a chance to speak, that you can complete your
thoughts without interruption, and that someone with a louder voice will not intimidate you. Each person who wants to speak is assured of being able to do so. If you have a soft voice, you know that you don't have to shout to get attention. If you are unaccustomed to speaking in a group, you are assured of having encouragement and the time to practice those skills. If you speak slowly or often pause to gather your thoughts, you are assured that nobody is going to jump in and grab the attention of the group before you complete what you have to say.

PASSING IT ALONG: NOTES AND MINUTES

Everyone who participates in a gathering takes personal notes. These notes facilitate the process of rotating chair. They are not a record of the meeting and are not generally shared with the group. They are used as a personal tool to remain in touch with thoughts you have while others are speaking. Your notes make it possible for you to keep an idea in mind that you want to share without interrupting someone else who is speaking. They form a personal journal of your experiences in the group. They can also serve as a personal reminder of what it is you have agreed to do. These notes are a valuable resource during closing, making possible your recall of specific process issues to which you want to speak.

For task-oriented groups, at least one individual can assume the responsibility for recording the proceedings of the gathering in the form of minutes. For gatherings that last longer than about an hour, passing this task along to different individuals in the group is helpful. Other kinds of groups may or may not decide to have group minutes.

Minutes are not required, but you may want to keep them for several reasons:

- Minutes provide a permanent record for the group's archives.
- Minutes communicate information to those who are not present at the gathering, so they can be informed of what happened.
- Minutes provide a reference for the convener of the next gathering.
- Minutes help members figure out what they are supposed to do next.

Some groups keep detailed records of all ideas and comments, including who spoke and a summary of what was said. Other groups keep simple records of who was present at the gathering, the decisions made, and the major factors that contributed to each decision. The group's needs may even vary from one gathering to the next.

TASK GROUPS: GETTING THINGS DONE

Sometimes the group (not any individual) rotates responsibilities to a committee, task group, or individual within the group. This is common when tasks require intense work and ongoing attention. The group determines what the
task group is responsible for and provides guidelines that help that task group accomplish their work in concert with the group's principles of solidarity. The task group then decides and acts in accord with their responsibility. The task group brings back to the larger group an accounting of their work and issues that require a larger perspective.

One benefit of having task groups for specific or ongoing work is the passing along of skills. A task group usually gets involved in doing intensive work that requires special skills and knowledge. Learning a skill is done by participating in the work, not by simply hearing about the results of the work. Hearing a finance task group's report, no matter how detailed, does not help anyone learn how to balance the books!

Task groups that are most effective in getting the job done and in passing along skills are those that have a balance of people who are experienced at the task and those who are learning. This requires a gradual shift over time in who is involved with any task group so that the work and responsibility rotate.

Active Listening

Active listening is a vital part of the process of rotating responsibility. Active listening means being fully "tuned in" to a speaker and verbally checking out your perception of what you heard. It requires deliberate awareness of how you perceive what other people say. When you are ready to confirm what you heard, request the chair and paraphrase in your own words what you understood. The speaker can affirm your perception or clarify any misunderstanding. Other people in the group can also contribute to helping everyone get clear as to the intended message.

The Tyrannies of Silence and Repetition

Working effectively together is difficult, if not impossible, if some people in the group consistently do not speak to issues. When you do not express your viewpoint, your silence deprives the group of the benefit of your ideas. Silence also leaves people wondering what you are really thinking, or even worse, making assumptions about your thoughts and opinions.

Remember: this process does not function on the notions of "majority" and "minority." Even if you are the only one who holds an opinion, the group must take your ideas and thoughts seriously. Every viewpoint is considered, regardless of how many or how few hold that viewpoint. Even more important, Peace and Power processes are based on valuing each individual, and others can only know what you uniquely offer to the group when you share your opinions, thoughts, and ideas.

At the same time, it is not necessary for every individual to address every issue. If your viewpoint has already been expressed, you need not repeat
what someone else has already said, although it is often important that you indicate to the group that you agree with that person. If you agree but have a different thought or concern to add, you need to speak to have your additional thought considered in the discussion.

**SHIFTING TO “EVERY-LOGUE”**

When two people are together, dialogue is highly desirable. It is important for each person to contribute to the discussion; otherwise, it is not a discussion. In a group larger than two, the same principle holds: everyone needs to contribute to the discussion. Otherwise, it is not a discussion. In a group of more than two people, dialogue is like a monologue in a twosome—one or two people dominate the discussion so that other voices are not heard. Any form of domination in a group discussion models power-over tactics of traditional meetings. Monologue or dialogue in a group alienates other participants, promotes argument and debate between individuals, and prevents other viewpoints from being heard. Rotating chair is designed to facilitate “every-logue,” assuring that every person speaks with a sufficient balance of time devoted to being heard.

When two people become engaged in energetic opposition to one another’s positions, it is time to have other voices heard. Conflict can be growthful and desirable (see Chapter 10), but when two individuals in conflict get caught up in the conflict itself, others in the group cannot participate in the discussion. As other people speak, the group can define what the issue really is. Also, the two people who are in conflict have an opportunity to reflect on their own positions, hear the thoughts and feelings of other group members, and decide if their thoughts and feelings are helping or hindering group process.

When you notice that two people are engaging in dialogue to the exclusion of others, request the chair. Share your observation of what is happening and convey your perspective on the issue. Then invite others to speak as well. Almost always, when other people speak, everyone gains insight and clarity about the issue, and many creative possibilities begin to emerge.

Sometimes one or two individuals have specific information about a certain issue. Directing a question to an individual and engaging in information exchange is different from exclusive dialogue. *Information exchange is simply that—information exchange!* The pitfall to watch for is when a group consistently defers to one or two individuals as the “knowledgeable ones.” This is a signal that sharing of information and skills is not happening, and the group needs to give attention to providing the opportunity for everyone to share points of view or information.

**VARIATIONS**

Rotating leadership and responsibility can be done in many different ways, and you will create ways not included here. The idea is to find ways that are effective in expressing the values and intents of Peace and Power (see the
value-based actions at the beginning of Chapter 6). Variations are often needed when the group is small (fewer than six), or large (more than about 40). Small groups tend to be less formal, and often rely on “dinner-table” styles of discussion. When this happens, everyone gets to speak, but the discussion may wander. In large groups, some people may not have the opportunity to speak, and shy people may find it very difficult to speak.

Here are some methods for promoting discussion that is consistent with Peace and Power processes.

**Sparking**

When an issue or a topic generates a great deal of excitement in the group, the discussion often moves naturally into a style that reflects the high energy of excitement. Many individuals begin to speak, sometimes at once, often spouting words and ideas into the air like a fountain.

This type of discussion is referred to as *sparking*. When it begins to happen naturally, it should be allowed to continue as long as the discussion is giving the group new ideas and energy to move forward. When some individuals begin to lose interest, however, or the ideas are beginning to be repetitive, it is time for the convener or another group member to assume leadership, asking the group to cease sparking and return to the more focused style of rotating chair.

You can bring an idea or topic to the group that needs sparking. Ask the group to enter this style of discussion for a specific time, or plan to include sparking around the idea at a future gathering.

Sparking is a valuable process for creating ideas and energy, but it does not work well to help everyone participate equally or to be heard. When you use it, do so with deliberate intent, and make sure everyone in the group is aware that this is what is going on. When it is time to cease, you can use circling to a transition back to rotating chair.

**Circling**

*Circling* is what happens when the group suspends discussion and rotation of the chair, inviting everyone in the group to take a turn in speaking to an issue. People listen to one another in turn. Nobody responds or discusses any comment or idea until everyone has spoken. If you have questions or want clarification, make a note to yourself so you can seek clarification after everyone has been heard. Although it is usually the convener, any group member who perceives that the group needs to focus and clarify may request the group to “circle.” Whoever calls for a circle then shares her perception of what the focus of the circle needs to be.

Everyone speaks very briefly, with comments limited to the focus for which circling has been requested. This provides a connection with all of the points of view at that particular time. It also provides a few moments for individuals to clarify their ideas in their own mind before speaking. Even if you have nothing specific to contribute at this time, it is important for you to speak during circling. You might simply say: “I am not clear about this issue and need more time.”
When the discussion seems to be nearing time to consider building a decision, but this is not yet clear, someone can request a circle to simply find out if people feel ready to move toward closure on the issue. At the end of sparking, circling can be a time for everyone to share which of the ideas expressed "sparked" the most.

Circling is especially helpful when tensions are running high, with two or three individuals at the center of the struggle. You can use circling to interrupt exclusive dialogue that often begins during times of tension. Circling gives every individual in the group the responsibility and the opportunity to speak, to share insights of the moment, or to express feelings that may not already be apparent. Circling provides the opportunity for people at the center of the struggle to listen attentively to the perspectives that others have to offer, and time to do some inner work with respect to the struggle.

Time Signal
Despite the best of intentions, individuals sometimes do get carried away speaking to an issue. If a group is having difficulty with extended "mini-speeches" that interfere with everyone's having the opportunity to speak, they can agree to use a time signal to help speakers remember to bring their comments to a close so that others can speak. A time signal is a simple "T" formed with the hands.

A conscious decision to use a time signal avoids the slip into unconscious patterns of interacting. Outshouting, long tirades, or other verbal forms of domination are common power-over habits that many well-intentioned people have cultivated. When a group is using rotating chair, a common unconscious habit used to try to interrupt long-winded speakers is hand-waving to ask for the chair while the speaker is still speaking. Not only is hand-waving disrespectful of the speaker, it is disruptive to the process and to the group, and places the responsibility for "monitoring" another speaker on those who are eager to speak.

When a group recognizes that long-winded speeches are interfering with their process, then a consciously chosen signal is a respectful way to begin to shift patterns of response to others in the group. The time signal does interrupt the speaker, but it has several features that are different from the power-over verbal interruptions or distracting hand-waving. It is a signal that is preferably agreed-on by the group because they share a desire to equalize access to discussion. The signal itself is quiet: it does not unnecessarily escalate emotions in the group with loud sound or frantic movement. Importantly, it is a signal that simply reminds the speaker of an agreed-on responsibility to give way for others to speak. The person who gives the time signal is not trying to overtake the speaker by asking to speak. The time signal is not a request for the chair; it is simply a reminder to the speaker that it is time to stop talking and give others the opportunity to speak. If no one shows a desire to speak, it is still beneficial for the group to remain silent for a few moments so that everyone can "recover"
from the concentration given to the previous speaker and think about the
direction they wish the discussion to take. If you are the one speaking when
someone gives the time signal, you have several benefits: you have an oppor-
tunity to re-assess the direction your lengthy comments were taking and
re-focus on the group as a whole. If you have become somewhat strident,
you can take time to calm down.

Calming the Air
Another hand motion that you can use is a calming motion, sometimes using
both hands, palm down, moving in a slow, circular motion, as if you were pet-
ting a cat. This motion is very helpful for groups that tend to work with a high
level of anxiety and stress, or that tend to erupt into unproductive sparking
types of discussion. Frequent eruptions of everyone talking at once signals
that anxiety and stress are running amok. A group can benefit from recogniz-
ing this pattern in their interactions and deliberately choosing to take steps
to change what happens.

The calming-the-air motion reminds the group of their commitment to end
interactions that feed unproductive anxieties, choosing instead those inter-
actions that help everyone remain focused and calm. When someone calms the air, the group ceases what is happening, takes a deep breath to-
gether, and remains still while they gather their thoughts and feelings to ad-
dress what is going on.

Random Ravings
Sometimes people think of “loose ends” that were not completely finished
during a discussion, or the group leaves a piece of business hanging for lack
of clarity on the matter. At some point during the gathering, usually toward the
end, loose ends tend to become more obvious. It is helpful to set aside a few
moments for everyone to reflect on any items that may need to be mentioned
briefly before end of the meeting. This time on the agenda is referred to as
“random ravings.”

While you take notes during the gathering, remember that there will be
time for addressing random ravings. You can simply circle any note you want
to address later, not interrupting the flow of discussion. When the time for ran-
dom ravings arrives, a quick review of your notes will help you recall these
fleeting thoughts. Group members can scan their notes to see if any loose
ends might be dangling that now need to be addressed. If a loose end de-
serves more discussion, the group can agree to place the item on the agenda
for the next gathering.

1Anne Montes of Buffalo, New York, suggested the idea of random ravings, and it instantly became
a regular part of our gatherings. This is a wonderful example of how the possibilities for Peace and
Power processes grow and expand.
Clusters

Large groups can draw on the processes for Peace and Power, but need to do so using clusters. A large gathering can begin with small clusters of participants checking in with one another, followed by each cluster reporting significant information with the large group. For example, if everyone in a cluster is in fine spirits and ready to fully participate in the gathering, then this cluster will simply report this to the group as a whole. If another cluster has a member who is recovering from being sick all week, and who will need to leave early to go to an appointment with the nurse practitioner, this can be shared with the large group. Another cluster might have someone who wants to place a ten-minute presentation on the agenda. Throughout the gathering, the group moves from the whole to clusters and back again.

When clusters are used, there is a convener of the whole, and there may also be conveners of the clusters, depending on the needs of the smaller groups. Clusters may need to make a written record of some of their discussions, either to recall the specifics of their work for reporting later to the larger group, or to contribute to a written record of the work of the whole group. When value-based decisions are required, clusters can be a very effective means of making sure that every perspective is carefully considered, with each cluster taking a particular aspect of the decision as a focus for their discussion.
Peace and Power value-based decision-building

- assures the best decisions that are possible at the time the decisions are made.
- includes flexible options to address different kinds of decisions.
- opens doors to using disagreements to build understanding.
- reduces misunderstandings concerning what the decision means for individuals and for the group.
- nurtures collective memory of the group's values and the path taken to put these values into action.
- brings together different perspectives on a situation, rather than polarizing points of view in opposition to one another.
- nurtures understanding, insight, and wisdom for everyone who participates.

These seemingly idealistic features of group interactions in the processes of forming decisions are possible because of the focus on the quality of the process, as well as the quality of the decisions themselves. As you might expect, decisions are made in ways that are very different from the practices of traditional hierarchical groups. Some of the practices used in traditional decision-making can be used, but these are used mindfully, based on the nature of the questions being asked and the values that are brought to the forefront of consideration.

Value-based decision building uses a comprehensive approach to addressing an issue that combines taking into account individual preferences (as in voting), hearing all points of view (as in consensus), and brainstorming all possibilities (as in creative problem solving). In addition, value-based decision-building incorporates processes of values clarification, conflict mediation, critical thinking, and problem solving. Despite its broad base, it is not difficult, nor is it unwieldy, given a group that is fully committed to forming decisions that are sound, well conceived, and clearly in the best interest of the group as a whole.
Value-based decision-building within a diverse group is possible because it is formed in the context of the group’s purpose, and is built consciously to be consistent with the group’s principles of solidarity. Decision-building processes, at the same time, contribute to clarifying and revising the purpose of the group and the principles of solidarity.

Value-based decisions are stronger, more valuable, and more lasting than those achieved by a majority, where (sometimes large and important) minority preferences are not taken into account. A value-based group decision is also stronger than any decision made by an individual, no matter how well informed that individual. When everyone has participated in building a decision, all individuals can act in concert with that decision because they understand everything considered in reaching the decision.

Voting, which uses and reinforces a divisive “power-over” dynamic within groups, is not used in value-based decision-building as a way of ultimately making a decision. Instead, all opinions, even if only one person brings a particular opinion to the group, are equally valued and carefully considered. As each perspective is considered, it is integrated as an explicit part of the decision, or as a factor that informs the direction the group takes. The group may often want or need to know how many of its members hold a particular perspective, and so a “straw vote” might be taken. However, this is for information only, and typically is not the only factor taken into account in building a decision.

Consensus decision making is quite like value-based decision-building; in fact, previous editions of this book focused on consensus. However, common understandings of consensus do not consciously ground a decision in the values of the group, which is a key element of the kind of decision building that is central to Peace and Power processes. Consensus, therefore, is defined as any approach to decision making that focuses on taking into account all perspectives, and finding a perspective that integrates as many of these perspectives as possible. The pitfall of consensus processes is that the group can founder without a clear understanding of which direction to take among many choices. A value-based decision-building approach shapes the direction and purpose around which the decision is built.

Value-based decision-building is not to be confused with compromise. Compromise requires that each person give something up in accepting a decision. Compromise decision making is often called “consensus decision making” simply because the group is not voting, but instead trying to agree. True consensus decision making does incorporate the process of exploring fully all options and finding the best option for the group, whereas compromise decision making involves finding that upon which all individuals can agree. In seeking simply to achieve agreement, the group relies on making individual concessions that result in a bottom line on which everyone can agree—often a weak and unsatisfactory outcome for the group.

In contrast, value-based decision-building embraces differences of individual perspectives while building solidarity around the group’s purposes. Value-based decision-building starts with the benefits the group envisions, so that it is a process that focuses on what each person and the group as a whole...
gain by the nature of the decision they reach. The group carefully considers individual wishes, preferences, or desires, and integrates these in light of the group’s shared purposes. Each individual shifts attention to that which the group as a whole sincerely values as a community. If an individual concedes a personal preference, it is done as an affirmative step to collectively support the group’s shared purpose and vision.

Value-based decision-building is not totalitarian “group-think.” What protects against this is the commitment to hear and value all points of view, and to refrain from bringing closure until all possibilities have fully been addressed. The group’s principles of solidarity provide the common focus for examining diverse views, but are a guide, not dogma. A new viewpoint on an issue can challenge the group to re-examine their principles of solidarity, resulting in healthy growth and change.

**HOW THE PROCESS WORKS**

Value-based decision-building includes the following processes that typically unfold in the following sequence, but that also can be used in fluid and circular patterns:

- Pose the central question or questions toward which the decision is oriented. For example, “Should we look for another location for our Center?” “What kind of programs should we offer in the coming year?” “Where should we meet?” While this seems to be a simple step, it is often overlooked and groups set about trying to make decisions with many different perspectives concerning what the decision really is about.

- Explore which of your principles of solidarity are central to this question. If a group has a principle of solidarity that sets forth a commitment to work within a specific budget, and not to place strain on that budget, then when they approach the issue of finding a new location, their process of decision building needs to be guided by this principle. Or, the group may come to realize that they need to stretch the limits of what might be possible beyond the constraints of the budget as they now see it in order to achieve certain goals that they also value highly.

- Describe the benefits that the group envisions for any decision that arises from this process. These benefits reflect underlying values that the group uses as yardsticks against which to measure the soundness of various options. These benefits need to be consistent with the group’s central principles of solidarity, but they are more situation-specific to the decision at hand. For example, a group that is contemplating a new location might identify the following benefits of any new location: it must be accessible to people who are underserved; it must remain within their budget; and it must provide the kind of space that is required to implement a new program that the group wishes to begin.
Brainstorm as many different perspectives on the question as possible. At this point, be clear that every possibility is open for discussion. No decision is contemplated or implied in this process. Remain open to all possibilities, even if they seem ludicrous at the time.

Use whatever means are indicated to gather the information needed to inform the decision. Obtain factual data, consult others in the community, or bring in guests to provide specialized information. Find out what has happened to other groups in similar circumstances. If at any time the group wants to know how many prefer one option over others, pause to take a straw vote that gives everyone information about where people stand on the issue at this point in time. Votes are not taken to decide an issue, but rather to inform the deliberation.

As you reach a point where you have considered many possibilities, and you have before you all the information you can gather, begin to seriously weigh the most viable options against the benefits you set forth early in the process. Narrow the possibilities to those options that are most congruent with these benefits.

If none of the options seems fully adequate, and the decision is one that cannot be set aside, then shift to consider how the group can move forward. Discuss the feasibility of moving forward with the option that seems the best at this time. Discuss as well what needs are not met if you take this direction, and how the group can make provisions to address these needs in the future. For example, consider the dilemma of a group that is considering a new location because the lease on their current space is not being renewed. They do not have the option to stay where they are currently located. They have agreed that any new location must be accessible to people who are underserved; it must remain within their budget; and it must provide the kind of space that is required to implement a new program that the group wishes to begin. There is one location that would be accessible and that provides adequate space to begin the new program, but the cost is greater than their budget. Five of the 20 members of the group favor this space, and wish to move forward and find a way to make up the difference in the cost. The other option is a space that is within the budget and accessible, but that does not provide the needed space. Fifteen of the members favor this space. As the group continues to discuss their options, everyone agrees that not to move forward with the new program would be shortsighted, particularly since within 18 months the new program will bring in new income. They turn their attention to figuring out how they might address the budget issue, and two of those who initially "voted" against this option find a grant that can cover the deficit until the new program begins to bring in new income. They apply for the grant, it is awarded, and the group contracts for the larger space.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>What Benefits do We Seek?</th>
<th>Key Decision Building Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where should we meet next year? (Options are scattered around the continental U.S. and Canada)</td>
<td>The majority of our members need to be present.</td>
<td>Honor the preference of the majority, making sure that a significant number of those will, in fact, be able to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members who have particular knowledge and skill in the area of political processes need to be present, along with as many others as possible.</td>
<td>Consider the preference of the majority in light of the preferences of those members with the needed knowledge and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location needs to provide low cost for members, child care, accessibility, etc. in order to make the meeting accessible to many who would not otherwise be able to attend.</td>
<td>Gather information about key sites that are possible, and use this information to inform the decision. Make sure that the provisions are sufficient to assure participation from those who might not otherwise be able to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All of the above are equally important benefits.</td>
<td>Review all of the information required for each benefit, and use this to guide making the best decision possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should be included on the program for next year's International Women's Day celebration?</td>
<td>We must work within our budget.</td>
<td>Gather information regarding costs of possible program features, and decide based on what can fit within the budget.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8–1 CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>WHAT BENEFITS DO WE SEEK?</th>
<th>KEY DECISION BUILDING PROCESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to present a diverse program, and then raise the money to do it.</td>
<td>Bring together all ideas for the program, and select a profile that represents the greatest diversity. Determine what is required for funding, and set this as the goal for fund raising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to reach women in the community who are alienated and under-recognized.</td>
<td>Bring together voices of women you seek to reach, and plan the program based on what they convey is important to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to reach under-recognized women, but must also work within our budget.</td>
<td>Decide based on what women convey is important to them, and together review how these features can be addressed within the budget you have.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most difficult challenge in value-based decision building is determining in advance the benefits the group seeks in making a decision. However, once this common ground is settled upon, reaching a sound decision becomes a relatively smooth process. The group can clearly see directions that will lead to a good and sound decision that takes into account—but is not dominated by—individual preferences.

Table 8-1 illustrates the links between the question that gives a focus to a decision, the benefits that might be envisioned, and the key processes that the group uses in building a decision.

**CALLING FOR CLOSURE**

When the group has heard all opinions about an issue, the convener or another member of the group summarizes what may be the predominant sense of the group and asks if this summary is satisfactory to all who are present. At
this point, any alternate viewpoint is expressed and the discussion continues with a focus on reaching a conclusion that takes into account all viewpoints. When there are no new possibilities, the group has built a decision.

Although the process at times seems unending by encouraging full discussion of controversy and differences, the satisfaction that comes from being clear about the values and benefits the group seeks, and from hearing each individual’s thoughts and ideas, far outweighs any frustrations. Although the process seems tedious, value-based decision-building is often more efficient than other forms of decision-making. This is true because there is rarely misunderstanding about what the group has decided, and people can fully invest in acting on the decision.

If discussion of an issue does not flow easily to build a decision, the group can decide not to decide, and leave the issue open for later discussion. Actually, there are few decisions that are truly urgent. Having to decide not to decide carries its own message: more thought and planning needs to go into the matter to form a sound decision.

If a decision seems urgent and the group is unable to reach closure, someone needs to call for the group to reflect on how urgent the decision really is. If it is truly not urgent, or if they can make an interim decision, the group leaves the matter open and places it on the agenda for the next gathering. If the decision is urgent, then the group must focus on the necessity of reaching a decision that everyone can live with for now, and plan for more discussion of the issues involved. Even in this circumstance, the more that the group is able to identify the values upon which the decision is built, the more satisfactory the decision will be in the long run.

Every member does not need to be present whenever the group makes a decision. For most decisions, those individuals present in a group can reach closure at the time the group discusses an issue. This is possible because the group’s principles of solidarity guide the process. However, if the decision being considered is one that directly affects the work of members of the group who are not present, consider the decision as tentative until all individuals who are affected can be part of the discussion. Those present for the discussion are responsible for sharing with those not present the full range of factors considered by the group, either in a written account, audio tape, or discussions with group members. If those who are not present bring new viewpoints to the matter, then the group continues the discussion over several gatherings to assure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the discussion and in the decision-building process.

**Positive Dissent**

Dissent occurs when the group is close to reaching closure in the decision-building process, and a few individuals indicate that they still have serious concerns and are not ready to reach closure. The right of an individual or small
minority to dissent is a strength that guards against the dangers of totalitarian groupthink. In order to assure that dissent proceeds as a positive strength in the decision-building process, consider the following specific questions when you face dissent in making a consensus decision.¹

* Have those who are dissenting fully disclosed their objections, and the underlying concerns, values, and reasons for their objections? Everyone may need to help in placing words around an individual’s concerns. Sometimes getting clear about exactly what is motivating dissent is not an easy thing to do, especially when you are in the difficult situation of being alone in your opinion. If you are in the majority, you may not agree with those who are dissenting. Take care not to assume that the dissenters have fully disclosed their concerns. Turn your attention to helping to find a way to express their underlying concerns.

* Have all members of the group fully heard, and do we all appreciate the concerns of those dissenting? One way to affirm the group’s solidarity in appreciation of the minority view is to have everyone state the dissent in their own way, and reflect to the group what they might do if this were their own perspective. In other words, have everyone place themselves in the shoes of those who hold the dissenting view.

* What underlying principle of solidarity or value does this situation bring to light? The value or principle may not be one that the group has addressed before, and getting clear about a new underlying value can have a major influence on what next step the group takes. If you identify an underlying value that is already part of your group’s principles, and this situation is challenging that value, this is a signal that the group may be at a turning point in its growth.

* What are all the possible decisions that we could make on this issue, taking into account this dissenting perspective? Which of these possible decisions could best reflect our group’s purpose and our principles of solidarity? Once you have all the alternatives clearly identified, and once you explicitly match the alternatives with what your group is really all about, you may be able to reach closure.

If your group considers these questions and they lead to productive discussion, you are experiencing positive and growthful dissent. If instead you become more confused and alienated from one another, then you are likely to be embroiled in a divisive power struggle. Despite the positive potential of dissent, dissenting individuals hold enormous potential to act in a divisive power-over manner. If you find yourself in a situation that cannot be resolved, you and the group have special responsibilities to seriously consider exactly what is happening.

Reaching a point in the decision-building process where positions are polarized is a signal that the group as a whole needs to step away from the "what" of the discussion and examine underlying values and commitments. To do this, move to processes for conflict transformation (Chapter 10). When most people in the group want to settle the matter and get on with things, it can feel very tedious to shift into a process of conflict transformation. However, when you consider the typical alternatives—hurt feelings, misunderstandings beyond repair, broken relationships, the resentment and anger that grow from unresolved disagreement—taking the time to attend to what is happening in the group is an attractive alternative indeed!

**EXAMPLE: DECIDING WHEN TO MEET**

The following example illustrates the processes of value-based decision-building. It includes illustration of differences between compromise decision making (where the focus is on what individuals have to concede), and value-based decision building (where the focus is on what everyone and the group gains). The decision—when to meet—seems on the surface like a relatively easy and somewhat inconsequential decision. However, this decision, like any other, calls forth challenges and reveals the values and strengths of the group in building community. It also illustrates how a relatively simple matter can be used as an occasion for the group to practice decision-building skills, so that as more weighty decisions come before the group, everyone has experienced the processes and understands what is happening.

In this example, a group of students in a very intensive program have formed a support group to study together and to practice the skills they are learning in a safe and supportive context. The demands of their class schedules and personal lives make it very difficult to find a mutually convenient time to meet, but all members of the group remains adamant that they want to meet weekly. They all agree that the purpose of meeting weekly is to assist one another in learning new skills, and that the benefits of meeting as a group are essential to their individual well-being and success in the program. They agree that they are “all in this together,” and want to make the commitment to contribute to one another’s success in the program by getting together weekly to practice.

**Compromise**

After some discussion, the group decides to circle to be clear about everyone’s preference. Several prefer Wednesday mid-day during a 90-minute break between classes. Several others prefer Friday afternoon after class. Those who object to Wednesday believe that cramming a group meeting between two long classes makes the day too long and intense. Those who object to Friday believe that they are too “burned out” at the end of classes on Friday to be able to participate in the group, and several have family or job responsibilities at this time.
Sue: How about if we rotate days? Then people could participate on the days they prefer.

Sally: Then we would really be breaking into two separate groups. I would rather not do that.

Randy: Wait a minute. I suggested a possibility—to meet before class on Wednesdays, when we are all fresh and not tired. Nobody has paid any attention to what I suggested. What kind of group is this anyway?

The group decides to circle again to make sure that everyone has considered Randy’s suggestion, and to see if people have any other new ideas. People comment on the possible benefits of meeting before class on Wednesday, but just about everyone objects to starting the day very early in the morning (7:00 A.M.) and then being in class until 4:30 in the afternoon.

Amanda: Well, it seems to me that most people have spoken in favor of Friday. After all, we will never find a time that suits everyone. Can we just agree to meet Friday for at least six weeks, and then change to another time if people want to do that?

Resigned, everyone agrees. In this scenario, the group has actually voted based on the majority favoring Friday as the meeting time. In reality, most of the people who expressed support for Friday also have reservations about the meeting time, and share the concerns of many who favored Wednesday. Those who favored Wednesday will, of necessity, be left out of participating on Friday because of their other commitments on Friday. Nobody leaves feeling particularly good. What is missing at this point is a real focus on the purpose and benefits that they agreed upon early in their discussion of a meeting time. The group did not integrate this as a key element in the decision-building process. They are caught in a conflict of wills, where individual preference is the only factor that was taken into consideration.

Value-Based Decision-Building

On the next Friday, the group meets and everyone is present, with many making personal sacrifices to be there. During check-in, several people make clear to the group how tired they are and how much they wish they could find another time to meet. The agenda was supposed to focus on planning several practice sessions before the mid-term exams. Amanda tells the group she has thought about the time-to-meet issue, and wants to at least share some of her thoughts before they start the agenda.

Amanda: Look, I don’t necessarily want to open this thing up again, so if people don’t want to discuss this after I tell you my thoughts I will be okay with that. But I was thinking that we need to shift our focus to why we want to do this in the first place—which is to be a support group for one another. We clearly can’t all always be here for
lots of different reasons, even when we want to be. We just don’t want to meet at a time that blocks someone from being able to be here (like when they have to be at work). So what I am wondering is, how can we be a support group for one another but not depend exclusively on when we meet? For example, we have a phone tree. We could use that to pass along words of encouragement and funny jokes—not just announcements about snow days! We could also look at the time we meet in light of when during the week we are feeling the most vulnerable and in need of support. I think it would be very supportive if we know when the group meets and where, and what is going to be happening, so if I want to consider not being there I know what I am missing, and I can always connect with folks who can be there.

Jo: What you are saying makes so much sense, Amanda, and it does fit with something I thought about after our last discussion. I was so turned off by that whole thing that I really began to wonder what kind of support we could be for one another if we can’t even decide about when to meet and feel good about what we decided. I was just totally wiped out after that meeting, and all I could think about was what on earth went wrong.

Sue: I agree. After our last discussion, I realized that I really don’t like the idea of rotating the days like I had suggested. Sally was right in pointing out that then we would break into two groups. I think that having a regular day and time is important because this leaves no question about how to find one another and where, when we really do need to connect.

Sally: Another thing I think is important is what Amanda said: we all need to know what is going to happen from week to week so we can decide if it is worth being there. I want this group to be meaningful and important—not just a feel-good party time, although I hope we party some! But if I am really tired or stressed out, I need to know what the group is planning to do to make a good decision about whether to make the effort to be there.

Randy: What if only one or two people show up and they really need other people there to help with their practice, but the rest of us have decided that it is not worth our effort to be there?

Everyone pauses while people think about this possibility.

Stephanie: We could agree that if anyone is going to the meeting knowing they need to practice, and they need others there to give feedback, then let all of us know in class so that the rest of us can realize how important this is to someone, and plan to go to help one another if we can possibly do it. After all, to me that is what support means: helping one another and not just getting help for myself. But it would also help me if I know what my friends need.
Melanie: And I do want our time to be productive and worthwhile. I will be very motivated to be there even at a time that is inconvenient for me if I am sure we are all committed to making it worthwhile.

Everyone pauses again. This time the pause suggests that they have no additional viewpoints to share.

Amanda: I've been taking some notes. Here's what I have so far. We need a stable time and place for the group to meet so we can plan ahead. Everyone needs to know in advance what the topic or activity is going to be. We want to know any individual needs before the group meets, when this is possible. We want to make it productive and worthwhile time in terms of supporting one another. Anything else so far?

The group affirms Amanda's summary and makes a few suggestions to refine it. They then decide that they will stay with the Friday time. After all, they were all able to shift their other responsibilities to be here today (even though this will not always be possible). They decide to re-assess the time of their meetings at the end of the term, and more importantly, to reflect on how they are feeling about their ability to support one another. They agree that everyone needs to be present for that discussion, and everyone indicates a willingness to make that commitment. Stephanie agrees to convene the next meeting and to circulate an initial draft of a plan for practicing so that they can discuss the plan quickly next Friday, and begin practicing their skills to make good use of their time together.
Chapter 9

Stepping from Here to There: Closing

Closing is:

- reflecting on the group's effectiveness.
- gaining self-knowledge and knowledge of the group.
- strengthening communication within the group.
- focusing on process rather than product.
- expressing love and respect for individuals and the group.

Closing is a time when all members share thoughts and feelings about what has happened during the gathering, and about what they would like to happen next. Each individual's closing is a three-part statement that includes the following components.

- Appreciation for someone or something that has happened during the process of the gathering.
- Critical reflection that brings to the group constructive insights about the processes of the group.
- Affirmation that expresses commitment to moving forward with the group's work and individual growth.

Closing a gathering using this process assures that the group remains open to envisioning and exploring alternatives, and uses the experiences of the group to form the future. Closing is a process that brings together each individual's intent and commitment in conjunction with the group's principles of solidarity. The overall purpose of closing is to strengthen the group and each individual.

Although closing is one of the most growthful of Peace and Power processes, it initially can feel risky. During closing, feelings that were simply undercurrents during discussion may be expressed openly, something that is not customary in typical groups. Ironically, feelings of caring and appreciation are also usually not expressed openly in groups. Angry or hurt feelings are especially avoided because they are simply not supposed to be acknowledged openly. During
closing, group members acknowledge feelings in constructive ways so that everyone in the group can develop a fuller understanding of one another and of the group. When this happens, everyone has the benefit of knowing what is really going on, internally for individuals and also within the group. Every time your group practices the skills involved in closing, you are building an important foundation for the skills of conflict transformation (Chapter 10).

**Closing Processes**

Use closing to end gatherings or to end a lengthy or intense discussion on a single topic, particularly during a gathering that lasts a day or longer. When the time to close arrives, set discussion aside and shift focus to reflection on the group’s process. To have the benefit of closing, everyone who is present at a gathering needs to be fully present for closing.

Sometimes you may be tempted to skip closing, especially in the early stages of getting established, or when decision building has consumed your time. This is unwise because closing is a process that assures that you and the group maintain the habits and practices that make Peace and Power values real. Once you begin to experience the benefits of closing, your group will become very dedicated to setting aside the time you need at the end of each gathering. One way to estimate the time you need is to plan for each person to have a few seconds to speak during closing. Or, for a one-hour meeting, plan about ten minutes for closing. For a gathering of a day or longer, set aside a half hour or so for closing. At the agreed upon time, the group takes a few minutes for each person to silently reflect on what has happened during the discussion and to review notes about the gathering. People then share their appreciation, critical reflection, and affirmation.

**Appreciation**

Appreciation acknowledges something that someone did or said, or a positive group interaction. It is a brief but meaningful statement. This is a time to actively nurture one another by sharing your ideas about specific ways in which you and the group benefitted from something that happened. For example, if someone’s comment in the discussion was a turning point to help clarify an issue for you, or moved the group discussion to a different level, you might state your appreciation for the comment, and share with the group how or why this comment was so important to you and the group.

Appreciation includes the following elements:

- the names of individuals who are responsible for what it is you appreciate
- a brief description of their specific acts or behavior
- sharing what this means to you as an individual within the group
- your ideas about what this means in terms of the group's purposes or principles of solidarity
Appreciation might be stated in this way: "I appreciate your leadership, Amanda, in shifting our focus from our individual wants and needs to our collective purpose. I learned so much by what you did and how that turned our discussion into working so well together."

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection (also called criticism), is careful, precise, thoughtful insight directed toward transformation. It is a tool for becoming aware of actions and behaviors that maintain an unjust society. It flourishes as a positive group process when the group also maintains a context of love and respect. When you use criticism with commitment to Peace and Power values, you practice a powerful skill to move toward agreement on what will be done and why. By working through disagreements and doubts, a group is better able to remain cohesive and can continue to work together when the going gets tough.

Critical reflection is like criticism in the arts, where developing your art to its finest level depends upon your own and others’ constructive criticism. This type of criticism identifies the meanings of your work and reveals what creative possibilities can develop further.

An art critic brings to the art insights and interpretations that help others to appreciate more fully what the artist has done, and what the art means for the culture as a whole. The critic does not proclaim the “correct” view of the art, but does provide a well-informed, knowledgeable interpretation of the art that helps others understand the art better, even if they don’t agree with the views of the critic.

In Peace and Power processes, your critical reflection brings to the group the best that you have to offer with the intent of helping everyone in the group better understand what the group is all about. Frame your critical reflection so that you claim ownership of your concerns, provide specific and clear content, and do so in a way that is likely to be heard and received by others in the group.¹

A growthful and constructive criticism includes these components:

- "I feel . . ." (your own feeling about what has happened)
- "When . . ." (a specific action, behavior, or circumstance that is the focus of your thinking)
- "I want . . ." (specific changes you want to happen)
- "Because . . ." (how your concern connects with the group’s principles of solidarity)

¹When Charlene and I were in the Emma Book Store Collective, the Collective used this guideline for a four-part criticism as published by Issues in Radical Therapy in 1976 in a small handbook by Gracie Lyons, Constructive Criticism: A Handbook. For years, Gracie’s book was out of print and we were not able to locate it. In 1988, it was re-published in a revised edition by Wingbow Press. The revision remains one of the best resources for developing this important skill. The Peace and Power approach to critical reflection draws on Gracie’s practical guidelines. In addition, many of her suggestions are integrated into our approaches for conflict transformation.
Later in this chapter, in the "How-To's, Helpful Hints, and Homework" section, you will find more guidelines for how to frame a constructive critical reflection. The following statement is an example of one such reflection.

"I feel anxious about the fact that we skipped our discussion to plan for the new member gathering next week. I would like at least four of us to meet either after this meeting or tomorrow to plan for next week because we are committed to modeling competence and confidence in our work together, and this is especially important when we are presenting our group to possible new members. Sue, Jen, and Amanda—would you, or anyone else, be willing to work with me on this?"

Affirmation

The conclusion of the three-step process of closing is a statement of affirmation that gives the group a sense of the way in which you are working to grow as an individual and as a member of the group. Affirmations are simple statements that speak to your deeper Self. They concentrate your energy on the healing, growthful aspects of your work with the group. They are powerful tools for creating change and growth in a direction that you desire.²

An affirmation reflects a reality that is not yet fully a part of your life, but you state it as if it has already come about. Affirmations offered during closing grow out of your experiences in the group, and often relate to your specific appreciations and critical reflections. They also emerge from the internal work you do apart from the group. For example, at a time when you feel uncertain about a decision, your affirmation might be: "I trust my own inner sense and the wisdom of our group." When a conflict has disturbed you, an affirmation to help transform the conflict might be: "I reside in the care that we have for each other."³

Initially you may find it difficult to affirm yourself. Until you are comfortable creating your own, use an affirmation that someone else suggests. (See the suggestions at the end of this chapter.) As your sense of self-affirmation grows, you will create your own. As you become accustomed to using affirmations as a source of directing your energy to create change, you will become skilled at expressing an affirmation during closing that moves you and the group from the circumstances of the present into a future you choose and create.

The following characterize an affirmation:

- It is a positive, simple statement.
- It is stated in the present tense.
- It is grounded in your present reality, but also provides a bridge to the future you seek.


An example of this type of affirmation is: “I am open to receiving the love of the group.”

**How-To’s, Helpful Hints, and Homework**

Because closing is so important, the following sections provide more detailed explanations and suggestions.

**Getting Your Head and Heart Together**

Getting ready to participate in closing requires thoughtful reflection so that you are clear about the content of what you want to say before you speak. Once you are clear about the content of your three-part closing statement, you can state it briefly and simply.

You have probably not learned to share your own responses to situations while you are in the situation. If this is the case, don’t worry—you are not alone. Doing so does not come easily or naturally. Practice is important. Even more important is a supportive, aware group that is fully committed to each member’s growth.

Written notes that you have taken throughout a gathering are very important at the time of closing. Productive gatherings are rarely uneventful, and in the intensity of the discussion you are likely to have thoughts and feelings about what happened and how it happened. Perhaps your perspective has shifted now that the discussion has ended. You may have become aware of an insight and are reaching a new understanding as the discussion comes to a close. Your notes provide words and ideas that you write as these things happen so that you won’t forget, and you can review your inner process when it is time to close. To help clarify or refine your thoughts, ask yourself:

- Did I do what I know? Were my behaviors consistent with my values and with our principles of solidarity?
- Were my actions honestly motivated by love and respect for myself, others, and the group?
- Did I remain alert and aware during discussion, or did I check-out mentally at some point?
- Am I aware of conflicts or differences that we still need to address?
- What occurred that promoted my own individual growth and the growth of the group?
- What changes in myself would I like to make?4

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4Notice that these questions are drawn directly from PEACE, the intent with which you enter the process. See Chapter 1.
Being Specific About the Agent
One of the most familiar yet subtle power-over powers is *mystification*: actions that obscure responsibility for what happens (Chapter 3). Sometimes owning responsibility can be uncomfortable because you regret what you are doing or have done. Often it is difficult to own responsibility because of shyness or false modesty. Sometimes you may feel a concern (possibly misguided) about protecting someone else. Sometimes people are hesitant to name someone specifically because of fear they will offend or embarrass the person. Sometimes discomfort comes from a general sense of something that you have not thought through.

To make this shift, consider why it is so important. Naming an instance and an agent (especially when the agent is yourself) is critical for growth to occur. If you don’t know what or how to change, you can’t take positive steps to do so. When people obscure an issue or mystify a concern, others can sense that something is amiss, wonder if they are responsible or to blame, and begin to feel suspicion and divisiveness. Naming the agent helps everyone in the group to understand more about the context of the issues. It becomes possible for the group to move forward to build trust and trustworthiness because everything is out in the open and everyone knows that no secrets or hidden agendas will be kept.⁵

Consider the following examples:

**Mystifying statement.** “The checkbook ledger has been well maintained for the past few months. This will make taxes much easier to prepare this year.” Although everyone in the group may know who has been keeping the checkbook and who is going to prepare taxes, this statement discounts the individuals and makes them anonymous. It creates divisiveness because of the implied message that someone before had not done a good job of keeping the checkbook.

**Demystifying statement.** “Anne, you have done a wonderful job of keeping the checkbook. I appreciate how much this will help me in getting the taxes prepared.” This statement lets everyone in the group know how well Anne, specifically, has been doing her job of keeping the checkbook balanced. It carries the message that Anne has a skill about which others might want to know. It lets everyone know that you own the responsibility for getting taxes prepared, and that you see your task as dependent upon the work that others are doing. The focus on the present situation effectively erases the implied mystifying message about what happened in the past.

⁵In an article entitled “With Gossip Aforethought” in the first issue of *Gossip: A Journal of Lesbian Feminist Ethics*, Anna Livia explains the importance of naming the agent and the source of information to build trust, especially when verbal stories we tell one another are our primary, if not only, way to find out what we need to know to work together. “It is reasonable to ask where a particular piece of gossip comes from. If a lesbian refuses to say, it is ostensibly to protect herself and her source. Why does she need protection, and from whom, if she repeats truthfully what she believes to be the truth? . . . If you won’t say how you know [about a person or situation], are we to think you made it up yourself?” (p. 62). Gossip is published by Onlywomen Press, Ltd. 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X OAP.
Mystifying statement. "I can't stand all this clutter!" Here you are owning the fact that you see the clutter, and that you have some negative feeling about it. The mystification and divisiveness in this statement arise from the fact that each person in the group has to wonder if you are mildly irritated, annoyed, or furious. Members also have to wonder if you meant your remark for them personally, or what they might have done to bring on this outburst. The matter of the clutter becomes only a vehicle for expressing your feeling, which may be due to the clutter, but it also could be directed at a person in the group whom you view as responsible for the clutter. This lack of clarity breeds distrust, suspicion, and divisive power-over relations.

Demystifying statement. "I am irritated with this clutter. I am not sure who is responsible, but it is definitely worse after Jane, Randy, and Joan have been here for their publicity meeting. Maybe we need more space to store their art supplies. Or maybe we are all just getting careless about leaving things around. I am willing to help work out a solution. What do other people think?" Here you state the fact that you are not sure about who is responsible, and your uncertainty is more believable because you go on to identify a group who may be contributing more than others. You are also offering a possible solution, and stating your intention to help solve the problem. This invites discussion and leaves you accessible to the group in the event that they find your compulsion about clutter irritating! You have left no room for suspicion, and trust and cohesiveness can build within the group because of the message that "we are in this together."

Being Specific About Your Feelings and Your Observations

A feeling statement is a precise communication of what is happening within yourself. It carries no hidden messages about what anyone else has done or is doing. An observation statement is a clear description of what you or someone else has done or said. An observation does not include what you think another person meant or what you suppose they intended.

Since owning and expressing feelings is risky, people tend to hint about something that someone else is doing or saying, or use blanket labels to characterize a person or situation. Labeling a person "arrogant" conveys your negative regard for the person. Owning your feelings of jealousy and competitiveness because she is good at what she does makes your feelings clear without imposing a judgment on someone else. Being clear about your feelings avoids labeling, blaming, or guilt-tripping another person. It lets other people know what is going on with you in a way that invites more discussion.

Compare the following statements:

Interpretive/blaming statement. "I feel rejected because I am never included in things." Even though the speaker uses the word feel, this statement avoids the real feelings of anger, annoyance, or hurt and implies what others are doing or not doing. The global phrase "I am never included . . ." invites
defensiveness and resentment from others in the group. You may think someone has rejected you because of something that happened, but your feeling is anger, hurt, or fear, whatever the intention or behavior of the other person.⁶

**Constructive statement.** "I am angry because I didn’t know about the change in our meeting time." This statement expresses exactly what you are experiencing, states a fact about what has happened and can lead to a constructive response. The response might clarify a misunderstanding: "I was disappointed that you weren’t at the meeting. I expected that you would be there because I left a message tucked in your door Tuesday afternoon. In the future, I will make sure that I get information to you directly."

**Interpretive/blaming statement.** "Sue, you are so irresponsible." This statement assigns a personality trait to Sue that is derogatory and hurtful. Being labeled "irresponsible" invites a negative, defensive, or hostile response from Sue. Your statement is a judgment that merely intimidates Sue and everyone else in the group, creates divisiveness, and cuts off discussion.

**Constructive statement.** "Sue, I am irritated because you have been 30 minutes late for the last four meetings. When you arrive, the group always gets distracted and we have to spend time going over things again. I invite everyone in the group to discuss this issue." This statement clearly expresses what you are feeling and identifies the behavior that you have observed and how it affects the group. Undoubtedly Sue will feel uncomfortable about having her lateness presented before the group for discussion. However, by inviting open discussion, you give Sue time to wait before responding and the benefit of hearing other perspectives. Group members can all enter into a problem-solving discussion without placing Sue in the spotlight or simply guilt-tripping her. In this example, everyone knows Sue is consistently late, but nobody knows why, and if something is going on that they all need to address. Once the discussion begins with everyone willing to own part of the problem, Sue can address what circumstances in her life have led to her being late, she can participate in considering a change in the meeting time, or both. If you are tempted not to address the issue because you know Sue might be uncomfortable, consider the alternatives. Your irritation would likely grow and affect your relationship with Sue. If this is also bothering others, Sue will feel something much more uncomfortable directed toward her from the group as everyone’s irritation grows.

**Stating What You Want**
When giving criticism directed toward something that needs to be done or that needs to change, provide a clear, specific statement of what you want. Focus on what you do want. Stating what you want is not a demand, nor does it mean that the group will respond by giving you what you want! It does, how-

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⁶Gracie Lyon's book has excellent lists of feeling words to help sort out words that carry blame from words that only own a feeling.
ever, move the group toward a solution or toward a constructive response to your criticism. If your criticism is not accepted by others in the group, the group can sort that out and still attend to your concern as fitting for you.

Typical habits of hierarchical culture lead to two tendencies: stating what you don’t want or merely implying what you want with some indirect or non-specific comment. Compare the effectiveness of each of the following statements.

**Constructive statement of what you want:** “I want two kids to help with this project.”

**Saying what you don’t want:** “I don’t think we should have too many kids on this project.”

**Implying what you want indirectly:** “Kids in this group just need to get involved.”

**Responding to Appreciation and to Criticism**

The most difficult thing to learn about both appreciation and criticism is how to accept them! Hearing statements of appreciation or criticism is not easy, especially in front of a group, no matter how skillfully they are delivered.

**When you receive appreciation, you have the following responsibilities:**

- Remain in an attentive, listening mode while the person who is sharing appreciation has finished speaking. Do not interrupt or respond directly. Appreciation is shared not only for you to hear, but to give the entire group to learn and grow. Your response would interrupt this process.
- Most often you need only to listen. If you do respond verbally in the group, graciously accept the appreciation. For women especially, it is tempting to discount compliments with responses like “Oh, it was nothing,” or “Well, I could have done it better.” These responses diminish the person who has shared appreciation and detract from the growthful effect that the appreciation—and also your own actions—could have for the entire group.

**When you receive criticism, you have at least four responsibilities:**

- Listen actively to make sure you understand clearly what the criticism is. This usually means that your first verbal response is to paraphrase what you perceive the criticism to be.
- Wait to hear the perspectives of others in the group. Usually different people have different perceptions of a situation, and hearing these will help you decide how well the criticism “fits.”
- Weigh how fair or accurate the criticism is. Sometimes you will know immediately that it is fair. More often, you will need a few minutes or several days to reflect on the criticism and integrate it.
- Respond in a constructive manner. For a fair criticism, the most constructive response is a behavioral response: you take the criticism to heart and change your behavior! If you decide that the criticism is not fair, share your thoughts with the group.
Responding to criticism without defensiveness or apologies is difficult, and often people don’t even recognize these habitual responses. Defenses or apologies do not contribute to the growth of the group, yourself, or other individuals. Compare the following responses:

**Constructive response.** “I think that you are right, Jane. I have not realized how important this is to the group, so I will work on being here when our meetings begin.” Or if you think the criticism has an element of unfairness: “I don't like being late either. But Jane, you have not taken into account the fact I ride the bus. I am wondering if the group could meet later so that when my bus runs late I won't be late for the meeting?”

**Defensive response.** “I think that Jane is right, but I am working as hard as I can to be here.” Or, “Give me a break. I'm doing the best I can.” If you think that the group has not recognized your efforts, then share this thought with the group, but focus on what you are feeling and thinking about what you can do to address the issue of being late.

**Apology.** “I know that Jane is right and I am very sorry. What more can I say?” You probably could say a lot more to help the group address the issue. You can also act—take steps to address the issue yourself. Being sorry does not make things right, nor does it help you or the group move forward. If you feel regret about what happened, share your feeling and suggest what you and the group can learn from the situation.

**Putting It All Together**

In reading about how to say things constructively, you may have lost sight of how all of this works together in a group. The following situation provides an example of how a group can work with a critical reflection. This example starts with a critical reflection given at the end of a gathering, when Justa became increasingly aware of the ageist implications of a remark she made in response to Adrienne, a younger woman in the group. At the time of closing, Justa shared her criticism.

“I am uncomfortable because of the comment I made to Adrienne earlier: ‘When you are older, Adrienne, you will understand.' I wanted to examine my own ageism because I am committed to creating a safe space here and think my remark was divisive and obstructive in contributing to that, not only for Adrienne, but for others as well.”

Wisely, Adrienne did not respond immediately. Two other women in the group spoke up and tried to reassure Justa that her remark was not ageist. They thought the remark showed Justa’s desire to help Adrienne. Several others in the group, however, began to share their perceptions, confirming the ageist implications of the remark. One person said: “I felt uncomfortable when you said that, Justa, but did not really think much about it. But when you put your remark in the context of
ageism, of course—it all made sense! I realize now how often I discount or overlook important signals in my own gut—I know something is not right, but I don’t know exactly what. I realize tonight that I need to pay attention to this."

After thoughtful reflection and hearing others’ perceptions, Adrienne could tune in to her own sense. She shared with the group that she felt angry when she heard the remark, but her awareness at the time had only been partial. Her immediate response had been to scold herself internally and to rationalize that Justa was sincere and a good person, and therefore she (Adrienne) should not have these negative feelings. She acknowledged that without the group’s focus, she would have left the gathering with a sense of distance from Justa, a sense of not belonging to the group, most of whom were older than herself, and discounting her own reality. She also reflected that she probably would not have realized exactly why. Now that the group had addressed it openly, she could acknowledge what had happened. Once Adrienne focused the group’s attention on her reality, everyone’s awareness of ageism and its divisiveness increased immensely.

Criticism as Homework
Sometimes you cannot think clearly and speak artfully at the time of closing. Often, people can only do so after the meeting is over. This gives you the opportunity to do your own internal work at home, especially when it comes to critical reflection. If you sense during a meeting that there is a criticism you need to develop at home, say during closing the nature of your concern, and ask the group to wait for a fuller criticism at the next gathering, either during check-in or as an agenda item.

Give criticism at a time when the group is receptive, open, and ready to address the concerns in your criticism. You may need to wait for a time that is right, or ask the group to plan for a time that can be set aside to address the issue.

Artful criticism arises from your deepest inner awareness, is energized by your emotions, and is finely crafted by your clearest thinking. It is shared with others in a manner and at a time when full awareness (including thoughts and feelings) can be called upon to address the issue. The homework required to do this includes getting in touch with the full range of feelings that you experience around the issue, and thinking about all of the facts and circumstances that are a part of the situation. It requires thinking through similar circumstances that you have experienced to search for a perspective that comes from that broader experience, and envisioning future possibilities that might emerge from this experience.

Constructive critical reflection is placed in the context of the purposes of the group. One way to do this is to take time to review the group’s principles of solidarity. Think about the present situation in light of each principle and how addressing the issue you are studying can strengthen the group.
Weigh carefully many possibilities. Imagine what might be different in a similar circumstance in the future, and also possibilities for what might now emerge from the situation as it is. Think about how you and the group might move forward in a direction that you carefully choose rather than a direction that just happens.

As you reflect on the situation, write ideas and thoughts on a sheet of paper. You can go over these notes to sort out which of your ideas are beneficial and constructive, and re-think ideas that may not be constructive. Once you see your ideas on paper, you can explore different ways of saying things, and make sure everything you need to say is there. When you share your ideas with the group, the notes you prepare at home can help you to remain focused, and include your full range of feelings and thoughts stated in constructive and beneficial ways.

Creating Affirmations
Affirmations often grow out of internal work that you do apart from the group and your experiences in the group. This work involves shifting your attention away from frustrations and problems to possibilities for growth and change. As you reflect on these possibilities, you will begin to form affirmations that provide a message to your inner consciousness that you are receptive to the energy of change moving in a creative, healing direction. Because the inner consciousness is responsive to repetition, repeat affirmations to yourself, using the same wording again and again, with shifts in the wording as you find what is most comfortable for you. Repeat the affirmations while you are doing rhythmic activities, such as exercising, cleaning, or walking. When you re-enter the group, you will bring with you the deep inner resources that you have developed within yourself to more effectively participate in the group.

Use the following affirmations while you are becoming accustomed to this element of Peace and Power processes:

- I value the light and clarity that I bring to situations.⁷
- All that I know is available to me when I need it.
- I believe in myself and our group.
- I care for my Self.
- I am at peace with those I love.
- I am in tune with my intuition.
- I believe in the power of our group.
- I act with confidence in my ability.
- The love we share for each other nourishes me.
- I willingly release the old and welcome the new in my life.
- I choose wisely because I listen to my inner voice.
- I gladly accept the support of those with whom I work.
- My love for myself brings love and support to all my relationships.

⁷Elizabeth Berrey of Cleveland, Ohio, created and owned this as her affirmation in the Friendship Collective. It is a statement that reflects what she has meant to many friends and colleagues, over and over again, in the work and play of living.
Conflict transformation:

- acknowledges conflict or potential for conflict early in an interaction.
- builds on the group’s principles of solidarity.
- enacts the powers of diversity and solidarity.
- rotates leadership and responsibility so that those at the center of a conflict can step aside.
- addresses issues critically and constructively.
- places the conflict in a greater context so that long-term and broad-reaching implications of the conflict are clear.
- expands practices of critical reflection to embrace the perspectives of the group as a whole.
- expands practices of value-based decision-building to move beyond the conflict itself.
- brings to light what everyone can learn and how the group can grow because of the experience of transforming conflict.

Conflict transformation involves ways of knowing and doing that are central to Peace and Power processes. Conflict transformation draws especially on the powers of diversity and solidarity. The Power of Diversity means encouraging creativity, valuing alternative views, and encouraging flexibility. The Power of Solidarity means integrating variety within the group (see Chapter 3).

Even at the best of times, enacting these powers is not always possible. When a group cannot integrate diversity or variety, the group inevitably becomes engaged in divisive conflict. Typically groups deal with conflict by ignoring it, backing away from it, getting caught up in it, or agreeing to disagree.

To move beyond the typical patterns of dealing with conflict, it is important to realize the subtle ways in which habits of power-over powers creep into your group interactions, and to develop ways to use the PEACE powers of diversity and solidarity. Making this shift will involve learning to embrace conflict as an opportunity for growth and an important part of group experience.
RE-DEFINING CONFLICT

Typical dictionary definitions of the word conflict refer to incompatibility, opposing action, antagonism, and hostility. Underlying those definitions is the suggestion of the potential for violence. Given how people learn language, they immediately know all of the dangerous connotations of conflict. It is little wonder that conflict is something people often try to avoid!

In fact, conflict is not always the same thing as hostility, antagonism, or incompatibility. Differences of opinion, disagreements, argument—all forms of conflict that may not involve hostility or violence—happen in all groups. However, a simple disagreement can quickly escalate into something that carries feelings of antagonism, polarization of viewpoints into “right and wrong,” and open hostility.

A number of approaches to dealing with conflict are very effective (conflict resolution, negotiation, arbitration, etc.), and Peace and Power approaches to conflict transformation draw on many of these. Of necessity, many approaches focus on reducing hostilities and on an outcome of compromise between opposing groups or individuals. The best approaches seek “win-win” solutions.

Peace and Power approaches are designed to transform conflict itself. In conflict transformation, the group addresses the immediate issue in constructive ways, but pays close attention to what everyone can learn from the situation. Everyone grows in understanding the group’s values, and uses the conflict process to develop new skills that contribute to the group’s cohesiveness and ability to integrate diversity.

A first step in moving toward a reality where conflict is valued and valuable is to recognize the limits of adversarial definitions of conflict, and to create a new way of thinking about conflict. In American English, there are no words to express the peaceful, even welcomed co-existence of differing points of view, different perspectives, or different ideas. When people in the group have opinions about an issue that reflect disagreement in a Peace and Power process, honest discussion can happen without hostility, antagonism, or competition for being “right.” Even when people have strong feelings such as hostility or anger, transforming conflict into something beneficial for the group and for individuals is possible. Being able to do this depends on knowing that you have a choice in dealing with conflict and that you can learn ways to transform conflict besides simply reducing or eliminating hostility.

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1 It is sometimes instructive to browse the dictionary to clarify what particular words have come to mean in popular usage, and additionally for the convoluted and interrelated shades of meanings attached to them. For instance, in Webster’s New College Dictionary, definitions of conflict refer to “competitive or opposing action of incompatibles” and “hostile encounter.” The American Heritage Dictionary defines conflict as “a prolonged battle; controversy; disagreement; opposition” and goes on to clarify the differences between conflict and contest. (Apparently, the degree of force involved makes a difference!) Little wonder that it is difficult to embrace conflict as a potentially growth-producing experience!
Foundations for Transforming Conflict into Solidarity and Diversity

Conflict transformation begins before there is conflict in a group. It is very difficult—often impossible—to transform conflict by waiting until conflict happens and then beginning to work on ways to deal with it differently. Groups can develop three important traditions during times of relative calm that build a strong foundation for transforming conflict.

Nurture a Strong Sense of Rotating Leadership Within the Group. A group that has practiced rotating leadership can turn to those who have the clarity, vision, and energy to address a conflict constructively when it happens. (See Chapters 6 and 7.) Effective leadership can re-focus the group’s attention and provide clear guidance in staying focused on the underlying issues rather than simply getting lost in the muddle of the conflict itself. Re-focusing is a critical element to bring about transformation; it places the conflict in a larger context so that people can respond to the larger implications and long-term effects of the conflict. If every individual within a group has experience at being a leader, each person already feels strong and supported in a leadership role, and can comfortably move into this role when the group experiences conflict. Those at the center of the conflict can wisely step aside, hear other perspectives, and focus on their own constructive responses and actions.

Practicing Constructive Criticism. Critical reflection (see Chapter 9) provides a way to move out of communication styles of blaming, hostility, and damaging verbal assaults. Instead, members of the group develop skills of communication that focus on the group’s responsibility for what happens in the group, and on future possibilities for constructive growth and change. Practice in using critical reflection when no real or serious conflict is involved builds the necessary skills in a safe context, and develops the group’s confidence in critical reflection as a safe and welcomed process. Critical reflection practiced regularly develops clarity about the group’s principles of solidarity so that when conflict occurs this clarity is a resource for addressing the conflict. If everyone has practiced and feels familiar with critical reflection, when conflict happens and someone begins using critical reflection in addressing the conflict, it brings a sense of safety and commitment to the process, rather than the usual sense of fear and dread.

Practicing Ways to Value Diversity. If your group has established habits that draw you closer to valuing individual differences, then when you do experience conflict you will have a strong basis from which to transform the conflict. Intense feelings typically narrow or restrict your ability to remain open. Habits of valuing diversity lay a foundation to being open to many options even when
feelings are running high. The processes of check-in (see Chapter 6) and closing (see Chapter 9) are two ways for groups to habitually recognize, honor, and celebrate diversities that exist within the group. When conflict occurs, you already know and appreciate diverse perspectives, interests, and talents that individuals bring to the situation. In transforming conflict, the group learns more about themselves but also builds on the foundation of diversity that they already appreciate.

INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES THAT TRANSFORM CONFLICT

Conflict within a group is a group responsibility; however, each individual can take significant steps toward changing patterns of behavior and communication that contribute to old patterns of dealing with conflict. You can practice three skills to change your personal habits of dealing with conflict: the gentle art of verbal self-defense; reclaiming the virtues of gossip; and appreciating anger as a source of strength.

The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense
Suzette Haden Elgin has developed a system of language behavior that is simple to learn and that creates dramatic shifts in interaction patterns. In Staying Well with the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense, she teaches readers specific skills to reduce hostility in human interactions, which in turn improve both individual and group well-being. Using the gentle art of verbal self-defense makes it possible to get out of negative loops of hostile verbal interactions and move instead into language that opens the way for greater understanding of differences.

Suzette describes twenty-one techniques. Four of her suggestions are particularly helpful in developing skills you can use when group tensions run high. Two of these are already part of Peace and Power processes.

Apply Miller's Law. Miller's law states: "In order to understand what another person is saying, you must assume that it is true and try to imagine what it could be true of." This does not mean that you always agree that what other people say is true, but you step into their perspectives and assume that this

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2Suzette Haden Elgin has written a number of books dealing with interpersonal skills, including The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense. Each book offers her approach to modes of communication and ways to break negative communication loops. The techniques she recommends are manageable and relatively easy to learn. You can practice her suggestions every day and begin to see far-reaching changes—many of which will improve your personal health and well-being.


4Staying Well with the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense, p. 7.
is true for them. Especially when you are aware that you are about to dismiss what someone has said because it is ridiculous, shift your thinking to apply Miller's law. Your response shifts to saying to the person, "I hear what you are saying. Tell me more about what you mean."

**Avoid Hostile Modes of Communication.** When you engage in hostile communication, you are not really dealing with an issue and you harm yourself and other people. Contrary to what many people believe, hostile communication does nothing to make anyone feel better (the old "get it off your chest" myth). Suzette's specific approaches for avoiding hostile communication are based on the awareness that "anything you feed will grow." If someone attacks by blaming and someone else blames back or counter-blames, the cycle of blaming will escalate. Instead, you can use a simple, factual, unemotional statement in what Suzette calls "the computer mode." An example of a hostile, blaming statement is: "If you really cared about this group, you would keep your problems to yourself!" A response that feeds the hostility and blame is the familiar, "Who do you think you are to act as if you never bring your problems to this group!" A response that would interrupt this loop might be, "It is interesting to consider that people's problems influence group interaction." This is a "computer mode" response that does not blame anyone; it moves away from the hostility and sends the clear message, "I am not going to participate in a negative interaction." Unlike more familiar responses of simply ignoring the blamer, or walking away from the situation, responses that effectively interrupt a negative or hostile verbal interaction also send the message, "I will stay and talk, but I will not do so in a way that hurts."

**Use Three-Part Messages.** When you are addressing a conflict or a potential conflict, Suzette suggests a message that has these components: "When you ..., "I feel ...", and "Because ..." These are like the components of a critical reflection; critical reflection also includes "I want ..." You can practice specific Peace and Power approaches to critical reflection (see Chapter 9) in your daily interactions with people. You can also refer to Suzette's excellent guidelines in learning and practicing this type of communication.

**Practice Syntonic Listening.** Peace and Power processes require active listening, particularly during discussion when you are using rotating chair, when people are checking-in or closing, and when you are addressing conflict. Syntonic listening is like active listening, which is remaining fully engaged with the other person without letting your mind wander to another topic or to your

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5 *Staying Well with the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense*, p. 23.

6 Note that, in a critical reflection, you also state what you want to happen next. Also, the "Because ..." part of a critical reflection focuses on the group's purposes and principles of solidarity, rather than only an individual's reason for addressing the issue.

7 *Staying Well with the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense*, p. 29–37.
own responses to what the person is saying. Suzette suggests practicing the art of syntonic listening by listening to a boring TV speaker for at least ten minutes. Your challenge is to practice not letting your mind wander to other things. When you can “stay tuned” you will be more aware of “tuning out” when it is important for you to give a speaker your full and undivided attention.

The gentle art of verbal self-defense is accessible and possible to learn even in less than ideal circumstances. You can work with any of Suzette’s books on your own, or you can work with others in your group to practice new language behaviors in your group. You will find that even one or two shifts in how you habitually respond to hostility will create dramatic changes in your verbal interactions, making it possible to experience conflict in ways that move away from hostility toward constructive ways of dealing with differences.

Reclaiming the Virtues of Gossip

Talk outside the group about people and events in the group, commonly known as gossip, can be a destructive source of group conflict or it can be an important source of group energy and creativity. Gossip is a skill linked with women’s talk.8 Gossip, like many other words in the English language that are often linked to women, once had a positive meaning that has now been distorted to a negative meaning. Originally, the word gossip was a noun for the woman who assisted the midwife at the time of birth. The gossip was the labor coach, and after the birth she went into the community to spread the news about the birth. She was considered a very wise woman who could communicate the wisdom of the stars.9

Groups can reclaim the art of gossip to develop new ways of talking about one another and events in the group.10 The talk shared among group members in the less structured setting outside the group can be an important source of energy that, like the labor coach, helps to give birth to the ideas and visions of the group. Constructive and energizing gossip builds on the values of Peace and Power. The ethics of gossip that follow assure talk that is constructive and growthful.

- Gossip is to be purposeful. When you tell a story about someone or something, tell why you are sharing the story. For example, if you are telling your friend about a budding sexual involvement between two...

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8 In *Man-Made Language* (Second Edition, Pandora Press, 1985), Dale Spender includes a poem beginning “what men dub tattle gossip women’s talk is really revolutionary activity...” She goes on to note “…we will have to invest the language with our own authentic meanings, and repudiate many of those which are currently accented as accurate...” (page 5)


members of the group, share the reason you want to talk about it. This could be because you are seeking ways to interrupt the divisiveness that could result in the group. When you and your friend both enter into gossip with this type of reason, you will move away from talk that derides, blames, or otherwise damages the people involved. Instead, your talk will focus on how the group can respond to the situation in ways that are respectful and that protect the integrity of the group. If you cannot name a reason to gossip that comes from a shared purpose, you should turn your talk to another topic.

- Own your Self. Focus on your own feelings and ideas, rather than what you think someone else felt or thought. Although you may be concerned about how other people in the group may feel or react to an emerging sexual involvement between two people in the group, focus your gossip on how you feel about it, and what your thoughts are about how it may influence the group.

- Name your source. When passing along information, be clear about how you came by the information. Share who told you about what happened, or how you know about what happened. If you cannot name your source, then do not pass along the information. Do not say, for example, “I heard that Shawna lied to her friends.” Instead, say: “Jane told me that Shawna lied.” Or, “I was in the group when Shawna told us what we later realized was a lie.”

- Be cautious about presenting information in a way that could be used to hurt another person; give information in a way that opens possibilities for greater compassion and understanding. For example, information that could be hurtful would be to leave a class saying: “I was astonished at what Priscilla said in class today! She really is intolerant!” A message that could convey the same astonishment, but not misrepresented or label Priscilla, would be: “I was astonished when I heard Priscilla’s views on the militarization of women’s lives. I need to think through how to continue this discussion the next time we meet.”

- Affirm the opportunity and possibility for growth and change. When talking about Priscilla’s comments on militarization, examine various points that you think need to be explored to move the discussion toward constructive understanding. Gossip that focuses on what else needs to happen moves toward greater understanding of the issues.

- Use humor as a way to address emotions, and to shed light on a situation. Be very cautious about hurtful, diminishing teasing. Never knowingly tease or ridicule another person, and be cautious about humor that is self-denigrating. For example, suppose you are telling a story about being put down when you spoke up as a student in a committee meeting. A comment made in a laughing tone (“I guess I am just an unimportant student who has no business expressing my opinion”) is not funny, nor is it dry humor. It is self-denigrating, and it passively implies ridicule of others about whose opinions you are only speculating.
Instead, you could tell your story about how people responded to your speaking up as a student, and proclaim “Students arise!” to move toward an affirming, joyful statement that off-sets your distress with the negative response you received.

- Use information to share and inform, not to manipulate. For example, if you honestly think that your friend is doing something wrong, then provide all the information you can that might help enlighten the situation without prodding or coercing your friend to decide in the direction you want. Refrain especially from making bold proclamations (which are always really speculations) about the future as a way to frighten the person to decide your way. Leave the decision to your friend, even if it may turn out to be one with which you do not agree. Do not say, “You are really going to regret this a year from now.” Say instead: “Let’s write down all the things that might come of this ten years down the road.”

- Use gossip to assist and to build community, not to compete. When you hear another person’s story, refrain from responding with a “one-up” story of your own. Instead, focus on sharing ideas and feelings about what her story means to you, and how together you can learn from the story. For example, if a friend tells you about a terrible thing that happened at work when they gave pay raises, do not launch into your own “ain’t-it-awful” story about when your boss denied you a pay raise. Instead, say that you have had an experience that is similar, but keep the focus of the discussion on what your friend has experienced and is learning about the politics of her work life.

Anger as a Source of Strength

Anger is a feeling that many people, especially women, have learned to deny. Understandably, women have learned to fear the anger of others because it is so closely linked to life-threatening violence against women. Women’s expression of anger can elicit life-threatening violence, further enforcing fear of their anger. Like the word conflict, anger is a word used in many societies to suggest many negative feelings and dynamics in human relationships. While anger is a fundamental feeling, other feelings and dynamics acquire the label as well. Anger is not the same thing as hatred, dislike, disgust, or envy. Emotions like hatred, disgust, or envy are not sources of strength in the way that anger can be, but these emotions need to be acknowledged and examined for their significance in pointing a way toward change and growth.

In groups committed to shifting ways of working with one another, dealing constructively with anger is a major step toward creating the safety needed to deal with conflict. Steps you can practice to learn new ways to deal with anger as a source of strength include the following:

- Recognize that your anger is a valuable tool or clue that something different needs to happen. Learn to take the time to move away from the situation until you are clear about what needs to happen differently.
Valuing Diversity and Solidarity: Conflict Transformation

Use your anger as a signal that you need to step away from the situation until you think through exactly what needs to change.

- Rehearse safe ways to acknowledge your anger with people who can support your growth and understand what you are working on. You can use critical reflection approaches in either role-plays you set up, or in relatively safe real-life situations. Rehearse when you are not feeling angry, but work with situations that have in the past, or could in the future, make you feel very angry. Rehearsing ways to acknowledge your anger will help you overcome your fear of anger so that it no longer immobilizes you but becomes a source of strength.

- Realize that unprepared confrontation is usually not a constructive approach to dealing with anger. Instead, confrontation usually polarizes and distances you from other people involved in the situation. Once you take the time to get clear about the signal that your anger represents, then you can think through approaches that address the situation directly and calmly, moving toward constructive changes in the situation.11 Practice using critical reflection in groups, giving special attention to how you share what you want to happen next. Notice how the group responds to your insights, and invite them to give you constructive suggestions.

GROUP APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMING CONFLICT

Whenever conflict enters the awareness of the group as a whole, or of individuals within the context of the group, it is group conflict. It is always tempting to dismiss conflict as "personality differences," assuming that two or three individuals will just have to work it out. While it is indeed desirable for individuals to resolve personal differences, conflict or hostile interactions within the group requires a group response if it is to be transformative for the group.

Group conflict is no one person's responsibility; no one or two individuals can resolve group conflict even if they resolve a conflict between themselves. Group conflict is everyone's responsibility. The outcome of openly dealing with conflict is transformation, where every individual learns, gains new insights, and experiences new possibilities. When conflict is addressed in a group, everyone learns from the many different points of view. Rather than having to resolve two points of view of individuals who are "at odds" in a group, several different people speak to the issue and many more possibilities emerge. The rich exchange that happens in this process brings forth many possibilities that

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11 A book that I have found particularly helpful is The Dance of Anger by Harriet Goldhor Lerner. It is a book written especially for women who have learned to fear anger. The approaches to dealing with anger are safe, constructive and, most of all, achievable. She provides useful and practical guidelines for changing interactions so that everyone involved benefits.
exist among group members and provides insight from which awareness of common ground emerges.

Peace and Power processes offer four distinct group actions that bring about transformation of conflict:

- owning group conflict
- interrupting habits that sustain divisiveness
- expanding critical reflection to a group process
- expanding value-based decision-building to shape a path to the future

Owning Group Conflict

When conflict occurs in a group, it is often initially expressed as if it were a conflict between two individuals or between opposing factions within the group. In reality, anything that happens in a group context belongs to the group—including those who may not be directly involved or invested in the issue at hand. If you isolate opposing individuals or factions within the group by labeling it as simply “their issue,” others in the group fail to recognize and own group dynamics that contribute to the situation—dynamics that everyone in the group shares.

To move toward group ownership of the conflict, everyone in the group participates in discussion that clarifies how the conflict relates to the group’s purpose and principles of solidarity. The group seeks diverse points of view and possibilities for reaching new understandings. In claiming group ownership of a conflict, the group brings misunderstandings of the conflict to light, each individual sees the situation from the fresh perspective that comes from group wisdom, and real shifts in attitude and action can begin to flow.

For example, Chullie, Justa, Lynn, Sue, and Betty formed a writers’ support group and decided to meet weekly over the summer. Chullie and Justa were the most experienced writers in the group, and the other women often turned to them for guidance. One of the group’s principles of solidarity, however, was to equalize the balance of power through sharing information and through valuing each person’s writing skills. Over several weeks, Justa became aware that whenever Lynn asked a question, it was directed only to Justa. When Justa spoke, Lynn paid careful attention; when others spoke, Lynn appeared uninterested. When Lynn had the chair, she looked only at Justa and always managed to sit where she could maintain eye contact with Justa. Justa became very uncomfortable with what she perceived as “shero-worship.” Justa was aware that she had not yet reached full understanding of exactly what it was that bothered her so much, but she decided that she needed to address the issue in the group before her irritation became so great she could not contribute constructively. During closing at the next gathering, Justa shared her critical reflection.

“I am growing increasingly uncomfortable—near a point of anger—every time I notice that Lynn is only directing questions to me, or mostly looks at me, and does not pay attention when other people in the group talk. I am concerned because we have made a commitment
to equalize power among us, and this interaction is setting me up as an expert, at least where Lynn is concerned. I want everyone in the group to think about this and at our next gathering share your perceptions—which may not be like mine—so that we can discuss what is going on and how we can be sure we are changing the balance of power here."

At check-in the following week, Betty responded to Justa’s criticism by saying that she thought the issue between Lynn and Justa was a personality conflict and that Justa was overly sensitive about her status as a successful writer. Chullie said that she had observed—and resented—Lynn’s admiration of Justa to the exclusion of others, and suggested that the group needed to look at how each person was contributing to the interactions between Justa and Lynn. Sue did not speak to the issue during check-in. Lynn began to cry and denied that she was treating Justa differently than she treated anyone else. After several exchanges that moved the group further into confusion and misunderstanding, they agreed to meet again later that week to examine this issue and to place other tasks “on hold” until they could resolve the conflict.

While their principles of solidarity reflected the ideal that members of this group were seeking better ways to work together and to equalize power imbalances, they encountered a conflict that could remain isolated as an issue between two people. If they dismissed it as an issue between two people, however, the issue would continue to plague the effective working relationships within the group. By the time of the meeting to discuss the conflict, Sue moved into a leadership role and prepared a SOPHIA that consciously refocused the group’s awareness on their principle of solidarity: “We will seek to equalize the balance of power among us.” She placed the following subjective before the group: What are each of our perceptions of the situation now that we have thought it through? What possible new directions can we imagine to equalize our balance of power?

Chullie shared her perception that Justa often spoke eloquently to the topic of discussion, but did not facilitate other members’ expressing their points of view. In fact, Chullie observed, Justa’s ability to be so articulate sometimes felt very intimidating. Betty, who had not noticed any of these dynamics, shared that the open expression of the conflict had given her the awareness that she had continued to feel like a real novice in the group and that this feeling, she now realized, was keeping her relatively unempowered as a writer. Lynn, who sincerely had not intended to treat Justa differently, began to realize that she had a habit of deferring to people she respected highly, and that her deference unconsciously sustained a power dynamic that she indeed found distasteful, but did not know how to interrupt. Additionally, she realized that she had not noticed the particular skills that Sue and Chullie also brought to the group, and had assumed that Betty was there, like herself, merely to learn how to write from the one person she saw as expert.

Once the group had entered into a full discussion of their perspectives, several things happened. Lynn consciously interrupted her doting behaviors
and asked the group’s feedback and support for acting on her intention to sustain mutually respectful relationships with everyone in the group.

Justa realized that she felt a certain “performance anxiety” to always provide answers and was relieved to be able to relax and interact without having to always be the teacher. She had not been aware that her ready answers were interfering with others’ ability to contribute. She shared her intention to honor other women’s contributions before assuming she had the answers. She began working with the affirmation “I value the talents of everyone in the group.”

Betty gained a new appreciation for a talent she had not previously realized that she had in proofreading and accurate spelling. She made a commitment to the group to bring these skills to the group. Everyone laughed when Justa acknowledged that she (Justa) was a terrible speller and proofreader, something the group had not realized.

Sue and Chullie reflected on their experiences of taking risks and assuming the burden of voicing difficult insights about what was going on. Sue had said some brave things during her SOPHIA, and appreciated the group’s responses. Chullie had confronted the effects of Justa’s actions, which had been very difficult for her because she had feared that Justa might take offense. Sue and Chullie gained a new respect for their own leadership skills and ability to stay with an uncomfortable situation until it was thoroughly explored.

In this example, the key to transforming the conflict was to own the conflict as a group problem. If the group had continued to isolate the problem as existing between Justa and Lynn, nothing new could have happened; in fact, the same old patterns of hurt feelings, continued aggravation, and frustration would have persisted. In first owning and then transforming the conflict, each individual gained new insights about her unique strengths; each individual also gained self-knowledge of ways she could change and grow. This group truly moved toward honoring diversity within the group, while at the same time growing in awareness of unifying values upon which their diversity rested.

Interrupting Habits That Sustain Divisiveness

Divisiveness is an all-too-familiar experience within groups. Divisiveness obscures commonalities, side-tracking groups from developing solidarity and diversity. Most of the things that sustain divisiveness in groups are habits that people have learned as the “right,” “assertive,” “savvy,” or “political” way to deal with group interactions. In fact, these habits are rooted in power-over values where the individual is assumed to be at odds with the group and with other individuals in the group. Integrating differences is not conceived as a possibility, much less a value. This list shows examples of what happens when you are nurturing diversity, contrasted with what happens when you are engaged in divisiveness.\(^{12}\)

\(^{12}\)These examples grew out of my experience with an extremely divisive work group. With Charlene’s wonderful sense of humor and assistance, I began to place myself in others’ shoes to try to appreciate in neutral terms what was happening, and in order to understand their perspectives in a positive light. We then imagined what things might be like in a group that valued diversity. I shared this with the group at the beginning of a retreat, and we did experience a more positive group interaction for that day.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Divisiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I am convinced that my point of view is the only reasonable one</td>
<td>I keep repeating it to make sure that everyone hears it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I still take the time to find out what other people think.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When things become tense in a discussion, and sides are being drawn</td>
<td>I usually know what side I am on and grow impatient with drawn-out discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage discussion so that each point of view is fully presented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make sure I express my point of view and limit my comments so that others may also speak to the issue.</td>
<td>I make sure I express my point of view at length so that others don't miss out on all the implications of my insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am aware that something I have said or done has bothered others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stop to consider what has happened and try to put myself in their shoes.</td>
<td>I figure it is their problem and it is up to them to work it out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When others are expressing their views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actively listen and hear them out before framing my response.</td>
<td>I usually already know what they are trying to say and jump in to say what I have to say to move the discussion along.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there is disagreement in the group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I invite everyone here to express their viewpoints so that we can all hear and consider these in reaching a decision.</td>
<td>I think the best way to deal with it is simply to agree to disagree and not get caught up in trivia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am unable to attend a scheduled meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make sure someone knows my concerns about relevant issues and is willing to take them to the group.</td>
<td>I figure I can catch up at the next meeting and let people know what I think.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To keep sight on the extent to which your group is overcoming habits of divisiveness and moving toward valuing diversity, consider the following:

Your group values diversity and solidarity if . . .

- You can name at least one thing your group does during every meeting that reflects the valuing of each individual.
• You can identify at least two recent occasions when your group’s decisions considered the minority view.
• You can identify at least three principles of solidarity held in common by each member of your group.
• You can name at least four recent occasions when the leadership in your group shifted spontaneously in response to the issue under discussion.
• You can identify (in your group’s most recent meeting) at least five instances when members freely expressed appreciation for one another.
• You can describe at least two points of disagreement that your group is currently considering, and, for each of the two points, you can describe at least three distinctly different perspectives that the group is considering.

**Expanding Critical Reflection**

The process of critical reflection can be expanded as a framework for fully addressing group conflict in a constructive manner. Each of the four elements of critical reflection is addressed by the group as a whole.

• “I feel...” Everyone in the group addresses feelings about the conflict situation, being careful to remain focused on feelings without blame and without pre-judging what is going on or who is doing what. It may be helpful to circle, with people briefly acknowledging their tension, anger, hurt, or indifference. Include positive feelings that can sustain the group in a constructive process, such as love, respect, hope, and trust. In the writing group, everyone expressed feelings about the situation in the first discussion, leading to initial confusion and misunderstanding. But as the group worked through the conflict, their feelings began to become more clear, shifting as their insights about the situation grew and expanded.

• “When...” The group then turns the discussion to making clear what has happened to bring the conflict to center-stage, acknowledging actions, words, or inactions. It is important to acknowledge individuals who are involved, without blame, but with honest and open factual accounting of agency in the situation. At this time, any misunderstandings about what has happened can be resolved, and a common ground of understanding built. In the writing group, Sue invited members to share their insights about what was happening when she closed her SOPHIA with the question: “What are each of our perceptions of the situation now that we have thought it through?”

• “I want...” All members share what they hope to see happen next. Again, it may be helpful to circle so that everyone speaks, revealing as many avenues as possible. In the writing group, Sue also invited the group to move into sharing what they wanted with the question, “What possible new directions can we envision to equalize our balance of power?”
“Because...” The group makes explicit the principles of solidarity that are emerging as central to the conflict and expresses values that are particular to the conflict itself. Everyone participates in considering how the group’s principles and values are reflected in the conflict, or how the conflict can expand or change the group’s principles of solidarity. As the writing group worked through their conflict, there was clear common ground around the principle of solidarity to equalize the balance of power in the group and the value of sharing of knowledge and skills. However, because of the conflict, the group came to appreciate these values at a deeper level, making it possible to act in different ways.

This process of expanded, whole-group critical reflection lays the foundation for moving into value-based decision-building.

**EXPANDED VALUE-BASED DECISION-BUILDING**

Conflict transformation is not the same kind of challenge that a group faces when they are forming a decision, but it leads to the kinds of decisions that represent deep commitments, insights, shifts in ways of being together, and shifts in attitude. The components of value-based decision-building that are expanded in transforming conflict include the following:

- **Describe the benefits that the group seeks.** Many possible benefits will emerge during critical reflection, but it is helpful to be sure that the group as a whole shares a vision of the benefits that can emerge from the conflict experience. This is a key to transforming conflict, rather than simply resolving or managing conflict. For example, a benefit that the writing group sought was to assure that members grew in their ability to write and to share their talents and expertise with one another.

- **Clarify which principles of solidarity the group seeks to bring to full expression.** The conflict situation in all likelihood provides an opportunity for members of the group to grow in their understanding of what their principles of solidarity really mean when they are translated into action. The writing group, for example, learned what it means to equalize the balance of power in the group when this principle plays out in everyday actions and interactions.

- **Identify as many approaches to moving beyond the conflict as are possible within the context of the group.** Transformation of conflict does not lead to one “answer” or solution. Rather, it leads to a number of actions, turns, or shifts in approach that are both individual and collective in nature. For example, in the writing group, several individuals
came to awarenesses that led to a shift in how they interacted in the group, but each individual shift brought to the group a real shift in how the group worked together. Justa learned how her ready answers interrupted other people’s expression of their views. Lynn learned that her long-time habit of deference to authority figures had far-reaching consequences for the group. The group as a whole grew in their collective ability to understand group dynamics that create and sustain power imbalances, and joined together in a commitment to shift group interactions to nurture balances of power.

**WHEN TRANSFORMATION OF CONFLICT IS NOT POSSIBLE**

Even when transforming conflict does not seem possible, it is well worth the effort to work toward the ideal for some time before giving up. Often, when it seems impossible, real movement toward the ideal is possible. However, when you and the group finally recognize that you cannot transform a conflict in an ideal sense, turn your energy to exploring what is possible to create better working relationships. In groups where membership is voluntary, it may be that it is time to consider ending the group altogether. (See Chapter 11.) Some voluntary groups and groups that are obliged to continue to work together might seek outside assistance in creating better working relationships. Even when less than ideal circumstances are the best that you can do, you can carry with you insights that come from the experience and build from the experience in the future.
It helps to remember why we are doing this work. I think there is sometimes the naïve assumption that if we talk about it enough, we will get it perfect, and I don’t believe in perfection. I don’t believe the world will ever be perfect, or that any of us will ever be perfect, or that our strategies will ever be perfect. In the effort to make social change, we learn and grow and develop, and that is what it is all about.

-Charlotte Bunch

Things happen in every group periodically that remind everyone of the challenges of doing the work of making change. Some of these happenings are pleasant and welcome. Others are less pleasant and are unwelcome. Peace and Power processes call for an awareness and anticipation of periodic group issues and challenges. This chapter describes some things that you can plan to ease the way through less-than-perfect times.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF PRINCIPLES OF SOLIDARITY

Periodically reviewing principles of solidarity is like cleaning house: it is easy to delay or neglect getting it done. Nevertheless, it is necessary for group well-being and feels good once it is done! Some groups select a season of the year as a time for assessing what is being done and thinking about changes that the group needs to make. In other groups, the time for taking a new look at the old principles comes when the focus shifts, such as when a task is completed or when group membership changes.

Three questions are helpful in taking a critical look at principles of solidarity.

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- Are we actually doing what this principle implies?
- If not, what are we doing?
- What principle is implied in what we are doing?

In the Friendship Collective, for example, we began with the principle that we would expect no financial contribution from any member in relation to our work. In practice, we encountered expenses for each person who remained a part of the group. For some women, these expenses were a problem. The review of our principles of solidarity made it possible to address these concerns and find a way to state a principle that brought the tension of unrealistic financial pressures into the open.

**Open or Closed Groups?**

In the ideal, Peace and Power groups usually seek to be open to all who wish to join. However, this is a decision that needs to be carefully considered. The work of the group and the purpose for which the group exists may not lend themselves to being completely open. The dilemma becomes, then, how to remain open to new thoughts, to integrating diversity within the group, and yet remain effective in your work.

One way to address this dilemma is to think of openness as relative and changing rather than as an opposing choice of open or closed. Task-oriented groups often need to maintain stability in membership to meet the pressing demands of tasks that form their central purpose for gathering. As the demands of the tasks change, a natural flow of movement occurs as some people leave the group (sometimes temporarily), and others join. Groups that are essentially permanent, such as a group that operates a community shelter, can identify times when membership is open and develop traditions to educate and orient new members.

**People Joining an Ongoing Group**

Integrating new members is a welcome but difficult transition. In open groups, the demands of constantly integrating new members is a challenge that requires far more time and energy than the group typically expects. Because Peace and Power groups do not "work" like typical groups, people who are new to the group are essentially in a foreign land, in the midst of a new culture that may be totally unfamiliar. The words spoken may be their language, but meanings of words take on a new character that existing members learn to take for granted. People unfamiliar with the language of Peace and Power often find themselves in a muddle trying to figure out what is really going on. Once a group is committed to welcoming new members, existing members need to be constantly aware of these dynamics and establish ways to ease the transition. Time at each gathering needs to be set aside to explain and clarify what is going on.
Groups that require relative stability in membership may set aside times during the year when the orientation of new members is the only focus for gathering. The group carefully plans these events, with each member of the existing group taking responsibility for part of the orientation. A typical new member agenda includes a brief oral history of the group, a review of the principles of solidarity, an orientation to what the group does, and a description of the contributions expected of all members.

For example, in the EMMA Book Store Collective, we planned new member potlucks four times a year, when those who were interested in joining the Collective could gather with us to learn about our history and our principles of solidarity, and to consider what was involved in membership. We expected everyone to staff the store four hours a week, and to gradually assume other tasks such as ordering new stock, managing the finances, planning for special occasions, working with other groups in the community, and taking care of the physical space. In the three months following a potluck, we expected new members to participate in each of the major activities of the business with an experienced collective member to become oriented to the tasks. In this way, each person had the opportunity to carefully consider making a lasting commitment.

**MEMBER LEAVING A GROUP**

In groups with unrestricted openness in membership, leaving the group may be a simple matter of not continuing to contribute financially or dropping out of the gatherings. In groups that exist for a purpose that involves personal development, such as a reading group or a support group, the group’s purpose may lead to a “live-and-let-live” response to someone’s leaving.

However, a member’s leaving the group often creates a void in the group, and people want to acknowledge the leave-taking openly in some way. In a group where an individual's leaving has any consequences for the members of the group, it is especially important to state in the principles of solidarity what the group wants to happen when someone leaves. Creating traditions around this event, similar to the traditions of welcoming new members, is helpful in making this a smooth transition for the group and for the member who is leaving. Because this event represents both an ending and a new beginning, one way to approach it is similar to closing, with an entire gathering devoted to a closing concerning the leaving of the individual. Each group member takes the time to express appreciation, critical reflection, and affirmation. From this, the person leaving as well as all members of the group can carry new insights into their separate futures.

**ASKING A MEMBER TO LEAVE A GROUP**

As difficult as it may be, sometimes the energies of the group and of an individual are not harmonious with one another. Whatever the issue is, the group must address it in some constructive way. The assumption that we can “live
together happily ever after” is simply not consistent with reality. Ending one phase and beginning a new phase is not necessarily a failure. Still, it is very traumatic for everyone involved to acknowledge difficulty that leads to asking a member to leave.

When a group finds that an individual is not able to function effectively as a group member, the issues must first be addressed openly, bringing to the discussion the fullest of intentions to act in a way that is consistent with the group’s principles. The group explores all possible avenues for resolving the issues. The discussion continues until every member is certain that the avenue chosen is one that is good for the group and loving and protective for the individual.

**ENDING A GROUP**

Ending a group does not mean that the group has been a failure. Often it is the celebration of the completion of the purpose for which the group formed. If the purpose was not a specific task that the group can wrap up in a neat package, then knowing when the purpose has been accomplished may not be easily recognizable. For example, a group formed to provide support for one another may find that after a while, people have sources of support elsewhere that had not existed when the group was first formed. When this happens, the group may have evolved into something that is no longer meaningful. When coming to the group’s gatherings begins to be a chore rather than a pleasure, it is time to consider ending the group.

Rather than let a group simply fizzle out, plan a specific event around which the group acknowledges their ending. The event provides a means for everyone to close this phase of their experience, taking something from it into the future. Planning for a gathering for a final closing of the group can be a rich and growthful experience.
CHAPTER

CLASSROOMS, COMMITTEES, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Learning and teaching can take place in the interests of human liberation, even within institutions created for social control.

-Kathleen Weller

The world desperately needs the new kinds of thinking that women can provide. I don’t think that women are any more pure or moral than men, but since women have not been imbedded in the power structures, they may be able to provide some original thinking about strategies that are not so tied to the systems of domination. We can perhaps shake up some of the established dominations and bring in a more justice-oriented vision of public policy at a local, national, and international level.

-Charlotte Bunch

When you bring Peace and Power into a group that exists within hierarchical institutions, you bring a powerful influence toward transformation. You can use the methods of Peace and Power as a whole, adapt them, or use them in part for moving to new power relations in traditional groups. Using the approaches of Peace and Power in existing institutions depends on the group making a conscious commitment to a value that they freely choose.

The Internet and the World Wide Web, developed from philosophies of democratization, offer new and exciting opportunities for groups seeking to equalize power. E-mail, distribution lists, discussion lists (list-servs), and bulletin boards offer equal access to expression without interruption or time constraints. The key is to make sure the people who need to participate in the discussion are out there “listening.” If a group decides to use the Internet for exchange of ideas and discussion, one commitment that the group needs to

consider is their expectation for participation. If you do use the Internet, many Peace and Power processes can easily be used as a framework to assure everyone’s participation.

People enter traditional groups such as classrooms, work teams, and committees expecting that the group will function as usual. When you present a different way of working together, explain the reasons for making the shift. If the reasons clearly relate to what the group has already been seeking, then the transition is relatively easy. The group can consider Peace and Power approaches as ways to help achieve what they already want to do.

Classrooms are especially well steeped in traditions and constrained by institutional rules. Peace and Power approaches can be a breath of fresh air in such settings, but they can also confuse people when it is not clear why the shift is happening. The traditional teacher-student power imbalance is familiar to everyone who has attended school. The teacher has the power to grade, to offer opinions and judgments, and to speak. The institution defines the student as a receiver of grades, a receiver of the teacher’s opinions and judgments, and the listener. Overcoming these expectations for roles and behaviors is not easy, and some institutional expectations cannot be ignored (such as the recording of grades to represent the achievement of a certain curricular or institutional standard).

Three values that classroom participants usually welcome are empowerment for all, demystification of content and processes (especially processes for grades), and creating community. Although people might assume that these values are central to what education is all about, they are ironically consistently undermined in most classroom situations. When a teacher brings alternatives to the classroom that clearly enact the values of empowerment, community, and demystification, dramatic change occurs in how teaching and learning occur.

While the values of empowerment, community, and demystification seem easy to embrace, the actual process of making the shift is a big challenge for everyone. Some people welcome the change; others respond with varying degrees of reserve, and still others object at the outset. If people who object have no alternatives, it may not be possible to make the shift. When individuals who object have a choice (for example, they can enroll in another section of a course), they are free to leave the group and pursue an alternative. Individuals who are initially hesitant but willing to stay with the group frequently relate moving stories about the inner transformations that occur for them during the group’s gatherings.3

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3 Professor Judy Lumby of Sydney, Australia, relates her experience using Peace and Power in teaching college nursing students:

“We mainly used the checking in and closing processes but all were aware of why these were important. Students evaluated the course very highly. They spoke about how at first they felt that the setting and the process was foreign, but they soon felt comfortable (after about 3 weeks) and felt able to share in a way which had not been possible before. They certainly shared some wonderful stories of care from the past and present and we reflected and critiqued each other’s stories to try to understand the ‘why’ behind our actions and how it might have been different. We found some similarities in our fears, concerns and beliefs about nursing. Students who I now meet in the ward speak about the course and say that the process was amazing for them.”
Whoever introduces *Peace and Power* to the group may find it helpful to prepare some written or verbal orientation that is specific to the work of the group. Focus on both the value shift and the process shift that you are proposing. In classroom situations, the teacher can prepare a course syllabus in a way that makes the values explicit and reflects how the process will bring those values to life. A member of a work team can prepare a similar description for the group to consider.

The ways in which the ideas of *Peace and Power* influence the work of groups in hierarchical institutions will differ greatly from group to group. The value the group decides to adopt as their principle guides their choice of method. For example, if a classroom group decides to work with the value of “sharing” as a focus for their time together, there are many ways this can be done. They can share leadership through the rotating role of the convenor, and share participation by using rotating chair during discussions. The group may choose a traditional lecture format for some classes as an avenue for enacting the value of sharing by the teacher to overcome knowledge imbalances. Or, they can choose to have the teacher lecture for part of the class time, with rotating-chair style of discussion for another part of the time. In addition, the group can also share drafts of their written work with one another as a way to exchange ideas freely. The possibilities are unlimited.

The key element in making decisions about what to do and how is clarity about what value or values the group chooses to embrace. From there, the group will find many ways to enact their values. The group can then periodically examine how well they are doing in creating the value and process changes they are seeking together.

Groups in institutions can handle the transition best if they choose one PEACE power as a starting point. Many groups work within traditions that alienate and divide individuals from one another, and groups are often eager to find a different ideal to work toward. Choosing one PEACE power implies a unifying value, provides a focus for the shifts in interaction, and maintains a grounding for times when the confusion of change becomes overwhelming.

The PEACE powers in Chapter 3 and the commitments in Chapter 4 are the basis for the suggestions in the following sections. Here the suggestions take into account typical challenges that you will encounter when you bring *Peace and Power* into an existing hierarchical institution. Some suggestions focus on individual behaviors, but all reflect fundamental shifts of value and attitude embraced by the whole group.

**Power of Process**

Required structures such as objectives, time-frames, or evaluation procedures are used as tools that provide a structure from which to work, but they are not the focal point. The process is the important dimension; the structure is only a tool and nothing more. How the interactions happen as you use the structure becomes the central focus, rather than a precise adherence to a prescribed procedure. Language is a tool to make the process possible, to create mental
images that reduce the power imbalances defined by the institution, and to create new relationships. The process itself becomes an important focus for discussion along with the "content" in a classroom, or the "business" of the work group. Priorities related to decision making shift, so that the urgency of making decisions lessens and the group learns to value wisdom that comes with the process. When this value is primary, closing can be a powerful tool to learning to enact this value.

Power of Letting Go
All participants let go of old habits and ways to make room for personal and collective growth. Teachers and work-group chairs let go of "power-over" attitudes and ways of being; class participants and work-group members let go of "tell-me-what-to-do" attitudes and ways of being. Those who tend to dominate discussion let go of their tendency to speak. Those who tend to remain silent let go of their tendency to sit back and watch. All participants move into ways of being that are personally empowering and that nurture the empowerment of others. All participants share their ideas, but shift to a focus of fully hearing and understanding others' points of view.

Power of the Whole
Mutual help networks within the group are encouraged. Old competitive habits are replaced with actions that reflect cooperation. Each individual makes sure that everyone in the group has any and all information that is required to be successful. Every individual is responsible for using talents and skills to address the interests of the group as a whole. Each participant, whether teacher or student, leader or member, is accountable to the whole group for negotiating specific agendas, keeping the group informed about absences, leaving early, arriving late, or initiating activities.

Power of Collectivity
Each participant is taken into account in the group's planning-in-process. The group works to address the needs of those who are moving into individual journeys where others may not be going. The group in some way addresses the needs of those who are having specific struggles. Individuals do not compete with one another. Instead, the group acknowledges and addresses everyone's needs as equally valuable. The group takes into account every point of view within the group in making decisions.

Power of Solidarity
The group recognizes solidarity as coming from the expression of differing points of view so that all can understand and integrate them into a richer and fuller appreciation of every individual. Out of this appreciation, each individual participates in clarifying the principle(s) that the group chooses to em-
brace. By actively seeking to understand the differing perspectives each person brings, the group can more fully understand what sustains them as a group.

Power of Sharing
All participants bring talents, skills, and abilities related to the work of the group, and actively engage in sharing their talents. Leaders and teachers enter groups with previously developed capabilities that are shared according to the needs of the group and in consideration of the structure-as-tool. Members and participants enter the group with personal talents, backgrounds, and experiences that everyone values and shares. All participants enter the group open to what others can share, open to learning from every other member.

Power of Integration
The group acknowledges all dimensions of the situation in planning their work. Each individual's unique and self-defined needs are acknowledged and integrated into the process. Everyone—not just the leader—participates in shaping how the group's work is done. The first portion of each gathering is set aside as a time for everyone to express her or his priorities, needs, and wishes for the gathering so that the group can integrate these as a part of the process for that gathering.

Power of Nurturing
The group respects each participant fully and unconditionally, and regards every person as necessary and integral to the experience of the group. The group plans tasks, activities, and approaches to nurture the gradual growth of new skills and abilities, assuring that every participant can be successful in reaching the goals of the group and in meeting individual needs.

Power of Distribution
Resources required for the work of the group (information, books, funds, space, transportation, equipment) are equally available and accessible to all members of the group. People share resources that individual members might purchase, such as books, equipment, or transportation (for example, through libraries, laboratories, resource rooms, or sharing among members), so that any individual who chooses not to use personal resources in this way—or who cannot—has equal access to the material. The group addresses issues arising from material inequalities among members openly to expose and overcome power imbalances perpetuated by economic privilege and disadvantage.

Power of Intuition
The process that occurs and what you address in the group depend as much on the experience of the moment as on any other factor. What emerges as important
for the group to address in the moment is what happens. The group lets go of what "ought" to happen to make possible what will happen. When institutional timelines or performance expectations have to be a priority, the group acknowledges other things: what seems to be emerging as important for the group, and what the institution defines as important. The group then weighs which priority comes first, and how they can still address both priorities.

Power of Consciousness
The group values ethical dimensions of the process as fundamental to the goals and purposes assigned to the group by the institution. The group considers every decision in terms of its ethical dimensions. Part of each gathering is devoted to a closing (appreciation, critical reflection, and affirmation) as a way to move to group awareness of the values represented in what is done, if these are the values the group intends.

Power of Diversity
The group plans and enacts deliberate processes to integrate points of view of individuals and groups whose perspectives they do not usually address. The group deliberately includes experiences (through writings, personal encounters, poetry, song, drama, etc.) of minority groups, of different classes, of different countries, of women. Rotating chair is one way to assure that everyone hears every voice in a group, and that the diversity that exists within the group can be expressed.

Power of Responsibility
All participants assume full responsibility as the agent for their role in the process. Rotating conveners is one way to nurture leadership. Rotating chair assures that everyone has a way to assume responsibility for what happens in group meetings. Each individual assumes responsibility to demystify the processes involved in all activities so that each member of the group has equal access to participating and understanding what is going on. In classrooms, grades become each individual's responsibility. Everyone shifts focus to what they are learning and accomplishing. The teacher or work-group leader has a special responsibility to help demystify the workings of the institution and to make explicit the political process within the institution.

Taking steps to adapt Peace and Power processes in hierarchical organizations and institutions can be risky, frightening, and discouraging. Sometimes your efforts will fail, and sometimes groups seem unable to move beyond mere token acts of working in ways that they envision. Often the hoped-for benefits and changes that happen seem completely invisible, only to become visible long after the group has ended. An important step you can take to overcome the isolation, fear, and frustration is to create a group outside the institution where you can enact Peace and Power values more fully. This is
usually a voluntary group committed to working together in order to create personal and social change. Experiencing a community, though it may be a small group, where you can realize Peace and Power ideals more fully provides a place of centering, of concentrating your energies in a healing direction, of support for the values that you are seeking to enact, and for exploring all that might be possible. Then, when the disappointments of the old world come crashing in, the visions of the new possibilities are there, somewhere.
Heart politics— the merging of power with openness, connectedness, and love—is part of the important work of evolving a way of creating and working with power. With this kind of power the criteria of success is the effect on living systems—human systems and the earth. Does our work and the way we exercise power promote life in all its dimensions? These are wonderful times to live in because there’s real work that needs to be done: the work of learning how to live together and how to live in ways that allow the earth to survive.

—Fran Peavey

This book initially grew out of a desire shared by Charlene Eldridge (Wheeler) and myself to document, in writing, the women’s wisdom that was passed on to us in the oral tradition and through lived example. For over a decade, until Charlene’s death, we worked and played in groups of women dedicated to transformation. There was real work to be done, and they were wonderful times. Most of our work happened outside of formal institutions, in groups and collectives that formed out of the need and desire to see something happen—something that would not happen if we did not organize with other women to make it happen. Out of our experiences emerged the ideas recorded in these pages.

Wilma Scott Heide, a nurse and the third President of the National Organization for Women, became a dear friend who inspired Charlene and me to venture into self-publishing the first edition of Peace and Power. We founded Margaretdaughters, Inc., and sent Wilma one of the first copies of Peace and Power.


2Margaretdaughters, Inc. was created in 1984 by Charlene Eldridge Wheeler and Peggy L. Chinn. The name was a tribute to our mothers, Margaret Eldridge and Margaret Tatum, who taught us the importance of Doing what we Know. We published feminist writing and calendars, and provided workshops on the use of Peace and Power until 1989, when we terminated our publishing venture and joined a large and respectable number of other small feminist presses that also succumbed to the realities of the publishing world.
Power printed. She told us that when she first read the book, she wept, both from the joy of seeing feminist ideas presented in this way, and from the anguish of not having had the benefit of some of these insights in her early years of activist work. As we conveyed to her many times before her death in 1984, it is because of her own courageous living, and that of women like her, that we were able to do the work on which these ideas are built.

Throughout the years since that first edition, I have used Peace and Power processes in classrooms, committees, workshops, coalitions to produce major events in the community, cooperatives of women running a bookstore, professional organizations, as a framework for conducting research, and, most important, in my personal interactions with family and friends. I can say that, without exception, the processes have never failed to lead toward constructive experiences. There have been many times when the shared hopes and dreams of those of us in these various groups did not fully materialize; but when we have tried to reach for the ideal, some aspect of the ideal has always emerged into reality. Most important, we have all learned a little something more about heart politics—about bringing together peace and power.

There have been many circumstances in my work life for which I have not encouraged Peace and Power processes. These situations are so steeped in hierarchical traditions, with participants who are fully vested in maintaining the status quo, that it has been quite clear that my energies would be better directed elsewhere. Still, from time to time, there are small windows of opportunity in these contexts to call for value-based action, which, as an act of resistance, brings to light a glimmer of what might be possible. These situations always remind me of how the daily hum-drum of living in our times mimics entirely the larger, global picture, where the problems of the world seem so intractable, and so far from the value-based political realities that we seek.

When Charlene and I wrote the third edition of this book, the United States had entered into another war—the Persian Gulf War. When the war “ended,” peace did not exist. This was yet another grim reminder that peace is not merely the absence of war, and that re-definition of power is desperately needed. During that time, Charlene and I talked with many women who were also eager to explore how to create peace on earth by beginning within, where we live and work everyday, in ways that build on the values of Peace and Power. We put many of the ideas together in the following list—a list that also forms images of communities for the future and that still inspires action in the very places where we all live and work.

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Many people shared their thoughts about the creation of a do-able peace list, sometimes not aware that their conversation was influencing our thinking. We were particularly influenced by the words and wisdom of Connie Blair, Lorraine Guyette, and other doctoral students at the University of Colorado School of Nursing, Pat Hickson, Janet Quinn, Carole Schroeder and her children Ben and Morgan, Kelleth Chinn, and Christine Tanner.
A Dozen and One Important Things You Can Do to Create Peace on Earth

1. Plant and nurture something that grows.
2. Practice the fine art of yielding—in your car, in conversation, etc.
3. Become active in a group that works on principles of cooperation, on principles of Peace and Power.
4. Fill your home, work, and commuting environments with visual and auditory images of peace and tranquility.
5. Do at least one thing to simplify your life and reduce your consumption of disposable products.
6. Do at least one thing to reduce your consumption of natural resources.
7. Move toward a vegetarian diet.
8. Learn and practice some form of meditation.
9. Learn and practice ways to reduce hostile interactions with others.
10. Exchange gentle forms of touch regularly.
11. Express appreciation to at least one individual or group every day.
12. Help three children learn three things on this list.
13. Pass this list along to someone else.

At the dawn of the year 2000, television stations around the world broadcast moving expressions from people all over the globe that, more than anything else in this next millennium, people yearn for peace. When we all learn to move beyond the celebration of a hoped-for dream, to putting peace into action in everything we do and say, we will have peace on earth. We begin here and now.
This new edition of Peace and Power: Building Communities for the Future has been published in response to the demand by women searching for a more efficient and effective way to manage group interactions. The four previous editions of this book have been used internationally for democratic consensus-building in women’s collectives. This new edition is the most current handbook for moving beyond hierarchical and patriarchal processes. The book outlines the steps for a successful group meeting, and gives hints on how to carry the benefits of your interactions with you in your everyday life.

**PEACE & POWER** has played a worldwide role in
- conflict resolution
- personal and professional growth and development
- enhancement of leadership skills
- strengthening of self-awareness
- fostering and nurturing of self-esteem and self-confidence

The fifth edition of this popular handbook can help you implement **PEACE & POWER** strategies in your own group in order for you and the members of your group to reap these same benefits in your personal and professional lives.