



Social Psychology, Mediation and Group Dynamics

This component will focus on the social psychology of group dynamics. Here one can use a notable body of knowledge on conflict resolution and mediation. Fundamental to the Social Artist is the wherewithal to employ tactics, strategies and procedures to neutralize or radically change components of traditional systems. This requires fundamental shifts in how we communicate with each other. Group methods include dialogue as transforming conversation, open space, appreciative inquiry, and the how-to's of finding common ground. In addition to learning communication skills, they will be taught how to catch subliminal cues, and recognize patterns of language and thought that are directing communication in positive or negative ways. The student will learn ways of helping people talk with each other about what important as they work to change their lives and communities They will learn how to provide resources to deepen those conversations and make it easier for people to share what they are learning, thinking and doing.

In areas where there has been unrelieved conflict they will learn ways of helping people create a sustainable peace that can replace years of hostility and conflict. This will include the hard work of meeting ones enemy and coming to know the human being behind the stereotype, or hearing theirs cries and of acknowledging the suffering in each others hearts. Peace grows eyeball to eyeball. Learners will study the art of compassionate listening as practiced in various parts of the world, especially between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews. The goal here is to give people, living in conflict, the experience of being heard without judgment, and to focus on the human values and reasons behind their opinions. Without such experience, dialogue meetings between traditionally opposing groups will often consist of canned speeches and people yelling at each other rather than healthy and productive conversation.

The learner will be advised that when one sets out to make significant changes, quite often, the waves of recalcitrance will rise to impede ones progress. The student will be shown ways of not losing heart, but rather renewing their efforts and keep on going. Moreover, they can learn to draw strength from the fact that whatever force is opposing one contains within it the energy that can be redirected to bring about transformation. All over the world, people as well as institutions are in similar states of alternating hope and fear, wishing for change yet denying its possibility. Through story, myth, and cross cultural anecdote the learner will discover that there is a powerful and effective stance in such cases, and learn to maintain a steadfastness of commitment and break through entropy by offering many surprising, unexpected ways of viewing a problematic situation.