

# Use of Self as Change Agent

*Adapted from the work of: Katherine M. Curran, Charles N. Seashore, Ph.D. Michael G. Welp, M.S.*

Working in collaboration – sharing power – with others is one of the most difficult of processes, especially when there is significant diversity of perspectives, needs, goals, motivations, power, resources and values.

Collaborating with this broad level of diversity also holds the greatest potential for impact as the blending of difference yields something new that neither perspective could generate without the other. But if the individuals attempting to collaborate are not conscious of whom they are in relation to the others, success is highly unlikely.

It is impossible to not have an impact. The moment we enter an environment, our presence influences what is happening. The more aware we are of how our being influences others and groups, the more choices we have in the way we influence change. We can never know all of the impacts we create – thus the work of becoming increasingly aware never ends. Use of self is the foundation instrument of the skillful change agent.

There are four levels of exploration regarding use of self in relation to others.

- **Awareness**
- **Honesty**
- **Connection**
- **Resistance**

Think about past or current collaborative processes you have been a part of as you examine each of these levels in greater detail.

## **AWARENESS & USE OF SELF IN COMMUNITY**

<b>AWARENESS</b>	Awareness is the first level of positive influence one can exert. Awareness is observing and identifying our patterns of being and influence – understanding what helps us to align our actions with our values to produce positive results. It is also about observing and gathering information from others about our “hooks” or “triggers” and beliefs that push us into reacting in opposition to our values. When we react rather than respond we limit or eliminate our ability to choose – usually producing undesirable results.
<b>KEY TO AWARENESS</b>	<b>The conscious change agent develops ever-increasing awareness of SELF in relation to others.</b>



## HONESTY & USE OF SELF IN COMMUNITY

<b>HONESTY</b>	<p>The degree to which we choose honesty over omitting important truths, or manipulating or distorting the truth in an attempt to control the outcome or to protect power, position or resources, is the degree to which we strengthen the foundation of trust the collaboration can build.</p> <p>Even if an untruth is concealed, it will still have a destabilizing impact on the collaboration as it will influence behavior, and will be felt as a 'vibe' that is out of alignment, limiting trust within, and the group's power to initiate and sustain change.</p> <p>Truth may cause ripples in what might be a smooth process, but the ripples of early truth are far easier to navigate than the tidal waves of hidden or uncovered untruths later in the process.</p>
<b>KEY TO HONESTY</b>	<b>The discerning change agent chooses honesty over control.</b>

## CONNECTION & USE OF SELF IN COMMUNITY

<b>CONNECTION</b>	<p>We choose how we connect to others in collaboration. Are the connections supportive, uplifting, seeking understanding and power sharing, or are they undermining, power brokering, controlling and competitive? Positive or affirmative connection is the choice to act out of collective responsibility for the good of the whole and all its parts, <i>including</i> your self. Undermining connection is the choice to act out of fear, putting individual needs or desire in opposition to the collective community.</p> <p>Connection is the most powerful use of self and is also the most effective means to see self and build awareness. It is often through what repels us, painful or turbulent connections that we understand the places where our work in understanding begins.</p>
<b>KEY TO CONNECTION</b>	<b>The abundant change agent enthusiastically chooses affirmative connections, especially across lines of difference.</b>

## RESISTANCE & USE OF SELF IN COMMUNITY

<b>RESISTANCE</b>	<p>Resistance is an important sign of a lack of alignment, within an individual or between members of a group. Resistance, though often uncomfortable or painful, is a blessing to collaboration-building. Resistance is a signal to pause and reflect, to seek out what needs to be expressed or resolved to develop greater alignment. Particularly when there are significant differences in power and influence, resistance may be the only safe form of influence some persons can exert. Care must be taken not to "out" the individual(s) holding the resistance, but to attend to the resistance and support the group in raising needs into awareness, where they can be safely addressed.</p>
<b>KEY TO WORKING WITH RESISTANCE</b>	<b>The resourceful change agent harnesses the power of internal and external resistance to restore balance and strengthen community.</b>

