

Peacemaking & Clearing

Conflict Resolution & Conscious Communication

Foundations that support ongoing maintenance of healthy relationships:

To maintain positive relationships within a group or team, Culture Garden uses a set of processes which facilitate Peacemaking and Clearing conflicts. We believe in these foundations:

- ❖ Conflict builds team strength – remember:
 - ✦ We learn & grow together through our diversity
 - ✦ Conflict is problem-solving in disguise
 - ✦ Our differences are gifts that make up a healthy whole
 - ✦ Be open to seeing something from a new angle
- ❖ Speak fearlessly and with compassion for all parties.
- ❖ Little & often: avoid building up a backlog of problems by addressing them soon after they arise

Intentions are to:

- ✓ Promote a sense of safety, inclusivity, and non-judgment
- ✓ Increase understanding and empathy, finding unity in our diversity
- ✓ Enable the peaceful resolution of difficult situations
- ✓ Support self-development and emotional growth
- ✓ Support & co-mentor each other in alignment with agreed values of the organisation

When and How to Use these Processes

- * If you have an interaction with someone that leaves you feeling upset, angry, hurt, confused, or any unpleasant emotion you could ask for a **Clearing** (see below)
- * If you experience someone behaving in a way that seems out of alignment with the organisation's Core Values and Core Agreements, you could offer **Constructive Feedback**.
- * If you notice something in the organisational system (work or community life not than a specific person) that is confusing or needs attention, you could ask for a **Picture Forming** to investigate a **Systemic Issue**.



These guidelines were developed by D. Benham and R. Cuthbertson



Definition of Terms:

Charge:

Feeling and holding an unpleasant emotion (upset, anger, discomfort, confusion) toward another person, as a result of an interaction or incident with them.

Trigger:

The subject or interaction which caused the charge. Also used to discuss a charge.

For example: *'he/she really triggered me'*. An emotional reaction to something someone said or did. For example: *"When John said I am always late, I was really triggered."*

Clearing:

The procedure by which a trigger is recognised and a charge is resolved.

This involves 9 steps which are detailed later in this document.

Feedback:

The process of sharing information with someone which will help them become more aware of a potentially unconscious pattern or behaviour which may have affected you or the group.

Projection:

A part of the personality that wants to be expressed, which can appear to be a charge with someone.

For example: If I become annoyed by what I perceive as someone speaking too much and often interrupting me – perhaps I am desperate to speak out more myself.

Shadow:

The parts of ourselves which we are unconsciously suppressing or not allowing expression. Not what we dislike about ourselves, but rather what we don't know about ourselves. A charge can be one way our shadow finds expression. If we have unconsciously suppressed our shadows, they will need expression before balance (or wholeness, or healing) can occur. Our unconscious attracts experiences that trigger us in order to allow us to become more conscious of our shadows.

Transference:

An unconscious desire for closure which can result in working out an unresolved issue from the past with someone in the present. We are usually not aware that this is what is happening.



Preparations for Clearing – BEFORE

Personal Considerations:

- ◆ **Peacemaking:** As members, we have agreed to take responsibility for making peace by understanding ourselves. Take some time to consider your own personal history, patterns, past difficulties and issues. Explore your own wounds, triggers, edges, sensitivities, or stories. We all have versions of these and they will have arisen in previous situations. Be prepared to explain some of these & their effects on the situation, during the Clearing.
- ◆ **Find Your Peace:** Find a way to quiet your mind and emotions. Spend some time using any personal tools which help you to regain a balanced emotional state. These may include meditation, connecting with nature, physical exercise, or talking with someone you trust.
- ◆ **Find an Ally:** If you are struggling to find your peace or to understand your part of the situation, try asking for help from an Ally, ideally someone you feel comfortable with and who will be honest with you. Ask your Ally to reflect on your situation. Sometimes our Allies can see our blind spots better than we can ourselves.
- ◆ **Find an Ally:** You can also ask your Ally to hold a space for you if you need to do some emotional release, especially for anger or frustration. Instead of bringing these difficult emotions directly into a Clearing, get them out of your system in advance. They may not look non-violent while you are expressing them, but that's OK, they are part of the Peacemaking process. Afterward, during the Clearing, you may be able to refer to these emotions more calmly.
- ◆ **Peace in the Body:** Align to your highest intention, to find the best outcome. Acknowledge your emotions, and continue to imagine what the 'highest good' might be for everyone. Try to remain aligned with this perspective during the Clearing.
- ◆ **Trust your gut.** It's normal to be a little nervous or hesitant before a Clearing. If, however, you are experiencing extreme emotions or physical discomfort (headache, nausea, sleeplessness, etc.) and are certain you will not be at your best, this will affect the success of the Clearing. It's OK to say 'no' to the Clearing for now and to find a better time.

Practical Considerations:

- ◆ **Timing:** Find a time convenient and comfortable for all parties where no one will feel pressured or rushed. Remember you can schedule more sessions if more time is needed.
- ◆ **Location:** Where is the most supportive place for everyone? Outside? Side by side rather than face to face? What kind of space feels good for everyone?
- ◆ **Set up an energy centre for the space:** Add flowers, or a bowl of water or salt, or a candle. Beautiful items can assist in diffusing the charge during the Clearing Procedure. Use whatever supports you in creating a safe and healing space.
- ◆ **Invited Parties:** Make certain everyone knows their role in advance. A Facilitator will open and close the space, maintain the pace, and guide the Clearing Procedure. Allies can lend participants energetic and moral support and can also help to suggest words if speech becomes difficult.

Preparations for Clearing – DURING

- ◆ In the beginning, **use a soft focus and peripheral vision** rather than looking directly at each other with intensity. This will help everyone to speak more gently from their hearts with trust and courage, and may help the conversation to move more easily.
- ◆ **Agree on a time limit.** A clear boundary will prevent the procedure becoming too long or exhausting. Speak with accuracy and economy.
- ◆ **Pause, or take a break,** if too many overwhelming emotions arise.
- ◆ **Speak using your 'finest words':** Be kind. Be mindful. For example: ask for help investigating the 'charge' to understand the situation better, rather than saying 'I have a problem with you'. This will help reduce defensiveness and increase a shared attitude of curiosity.

Clearing Procedure – In 9 Steps

1. Gratitude for Each Other:

Welcome and honour the other person, giving them some positive feedback. Use specific examples. This can help increase positive emotions.

2. Data & Facts

Outline what happened that created the negative emotions you are holding, the 'charge.'

- Be clear, honest, and accurate, avoiding large generalisations
 - * ie: “*you always do that,*” “*I've told you a thousand times before*”.
- Allow the other person to respond. There may have been an unknown miscommunication which, when revealed, eliminates the 'charge.'

3. Your Emotions:

Using one of five emotions (sad, mad, glad, bad, fear), describe how the situation made you feel.

- This helps increase empathy and promotes understanding of the effects of our actions.

4. Your Judgments:

Conflicts involving negative emotions often lead us to unconsciously form judgments based on assumptions

5. Your Regrets:

Share whatever you have done (or not) that may have increased the conflict or neglected the relationship

- * ie: “*I regret that I haven't had more time to connect with you.*”
- * ie: “*I regret not tending our relationship.*”

6. Inner Reflection:

Reflect on which part of the 'charge' may be coming from you.

- **The Past:** Do you have a history, behavioural pattern, or family dynamic that could increase your sensitivity to the situation? Observe yourself and take responsibility for your part.
 - * ie: “*I am sensitive about receiving criticism, because my father was very critical, so I have a hard time with it*”
- **Emotional Needs:** We all have emotional needs (love, belonging, appreciation).
 - * An unmet emotional need can develop into a 'charge.'
 - * Determine if you have any unmet emotional needs in your situation. Speaking aloud our emotional needs can increase understanding and empathy.

7. Requests:

Ask for a behaviour change or follow up actions. What will help to heal the issue?

- * ie: “*Can we spend time once a week and get to know each other better?*” or
- * ie: “*I would love it if you could remember that I work more slowly than you. Can you be patient with me while I learn?*”

8. Other Person – *Reflective Listening* — **Mirroring & Responding**

At regular intervals allow the other person to respond.

- Listen to their response fully and from the heart.
- When each person has finished speaking, summarise what you have heard, so each can feel understood.
- If you feel there is any truth in their judgment (e.g. you were angry with them, or you were impatient), take responsibility and explain why.

9. Gratitude:

Say thank you to yourselves and each other, and close.





Notes & Examples

Notes for Facilitators

- ❖ Before beginning, make certain there is no charge between any of the participants and the facilitator. If there is, find another facilitator.
- ❖ Insist the participants be very specific with their data.
- ❖ Actively guide the interaction. Ask probing questions:
 - * 'Is that an emotion or a judgment?'
 - * State clearly, gently, and firmly whenever you observe a miscommunication or a confusion

Notes for Participants

- ❖ Get curious whenever there is a charge. Instead of using energy to avoid or defend, try using the existence of charge to increase awareness about the situation, for everyone involved.
- ❖ Investigate any charge you are holding. Try a small homeopathic dose of what has triggered you. Imagine yourself displaying the exact behaviour or attitude which has generated the charge.
 - * Does that feel uncomfortable?
 - * Does it clash with your belief system?
 - * Is this a behaviour or attitude that you wish you were more comfortable with?
 - * You might learn something about yourself.
- ❖ Take your time and discuss the issue slowly. This encourages speaking truthfully from the heart.

2 Examples

Example 1: The Clearing Procedure is for resolving interpersonal issues, and is designed to be helpful. The Nine-Step procedure for holding a Clearing, outlined below, can be done informally. Two people can agree on a mutually convenient time, make the proper preparations beforehand, and then run through the nine steps together. Ideally this becomes quite normal in the organisation, so no one need feel worried about approaching someone and asking to do this. It also becomes easier with practice.

Sometimes we feel nervous about asking for a Clearing Procedure. We may be inexperienced with the process, or the issue may feel particularly difficult. Asking an experienced facilitator to lead the procedure will help create safety for both parties. The facilitator can help to guide the Clearing Procedure, making certain everyone is fully heard and all concerns are addressed. Ideally the organisation has several members with experience facilitating Clearings.

Example 2: Members might offer Constructive Feedback after noticing something, or when wanting to share information, to make a request for a behaviour change, or to understand why someone is doing something. Unlike a Clearing, an offer of Feedback will have no emotional charge.

For example: I may observe someone behaving in a way that I perceive as out of alignment with the organisation's Core Values or Core Agreements. I perceived Person A complaining about Person B's behaviour to me rather than taking those concerns directly to Person B.

In this situation it would be easy for me to hold negative emotions or create judgments about Person A. It's important for me to remain curious rather than emotional when I offer Constructive Feedback. I might ask Person A in a gentle questioning way, "*I notice that you're talking about B a lot and seem unhappy. I wonder if you have spoken to B directly about how you're feeling?*" Using questions rather than statements will help Person A receive and consider the feedback without feeling attacked or becoming defensive — then be very open to hearing Person A's response.