ABRIDGED

Coordinating Values to Support Consensus Neutrality

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Outline & Invitations

01 | Welcome

Invitations to bring our fullest selves to the space.

02 | Consent

Invitations to support consent as a practice of affirmation.

03 | Value

Invitations to alignment.

04 | Imagination

Invitations to other ways through

01

Welcome

Invitations to bring our
fullest selves to the space.

Practices of Welcome

- Coordinate a gathering space.
- Indicate what a space-holder is valuing.
- Tell participants what parts of themselves have been thought of and prepared for.
- Offer the opportunity for acknowledging interdependence.
- Offer the opportunity for group calibration.

Invitation to Reflection

Sensing Welcome

When entering a new space for the first time, what little things do you notice that indicate care has been offered?



Offering Welcome

When welcoming someone into your home, what are the little things you like to do to support someone's comfort?

Welcome Awareness

Who is invited to this gathering space?

Who feels welcome in this gathering space?

How are people invited to participate?

What are we asking people to bring and to leave behind during this gathering?

What is the balance between invitation and demand in this gathering space?

When gathering, consider:

- Bodies, minds, sensations
- Distribution of demands

02

Consent

Invitations to support consent as a practice of affirmation.

Defining Consent

In our current world, consent refers to both:

- the principle of consent as an inalienable right of a sovereign subject to permit and/or rescind permission to be interacted with (to act and/or acted upon) in a specific way.

AND

- please sign here on the dotted line to absolve us of blame and responsibility.

(Re)Defining Consent

- Consent is not a transitive verb.
- Consent is distinct from the legal concept of “liability”.
- Consent is given not gotten.
- Consent is dynamic and responsive.
- Consent cannot exist where dissent is not also welcomed and affirmed.
- Consent is in conversation with coercion.
- Consent is coordinated by the way power, threat, history, culture, habit, training, instinct, impulse, values, and imagination are circulating in an interrelational space.
- Consent is full of tension
- Consent is less possible when dissent is unwelcome.

Holding the Tension of Dissent

- Welcome tension as a vital energy.
- Welcoming dissent allows us to invite consensus-building processes.
- Acknowledge feelings and needs.
- Name the stakes and determine level of engagement that will be considered appropriate (higher stakes needs higher engagement).
- Note any relationship between strategies of forward motion and coercion.
- Anchor the discussion in value.

Invitation to Reflection

Willingness

What invites your fullest sense of willingness?

How do you invite the fullest sense of willingness in others?



Wanting

What invites your fullest sense of desire?

How do you invite the fullest sense of desire in others?

Consent Awareness

Where is my system on the spectrum of consent in this moment?

What is the balance between consent and coercion in this gathering space?

How is dissent being welcomed into the space?

How often am I inviting others to revisit their sense of consent?

How am I holding the tension between enduring-tolerating and willing-wanting people and parts?

03

Value

Invitations to alignment.

Axiological Assumptions

"[A]xiological assumptions refer to the often-unexamined, unrecognized, or mistakenly universalized values that influence our work: Personal or disciplinary assumptions about what is good and bad, right and wrong, and more or less valuable, worthy, desirable, and beautiful"

Peers, D. (2018). Engaging axiology: Enabling meaningful transdisciplinary collaboration in adapted physical activity. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 35*, pp. 267-284. https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.2017-0095.

Neutrality in ADR Spaces

The relative absence of any research on the practice of neutrality suggests that neutrality functions like a folk concept, talked, practiced, and researched on the basis of tacit and local understandings, contained in (and by) a rhetoric about power and conflict. This rhetoric, in turn, contributes to the reconfirmation of these same tacit understandings about neutrality. Thus, like other folk concepts, neutrality is both "transparent" and "opaque": transparent because it operates on the basis of widely held assumptions about power and conflict, and opaque because it is exceedingly difficult to raise questions about the nature and practice of neutrality from within this consensus. (p. 37)

Cobb, S., & Rifkin, J. (1991). Practice and paradox: deconstructing neutrality in mediation. *Law and Social Inquiry, 16*(1), 35-64.

Neutrality in ADR Spaces

- Two parents. One kid, 12 years old.
- Lots of dispute in the past but have a working agreement.
- Custody: Joint
- Parenting Shared: 60/40
- Parties seeking resolution on a medical matter related to their shared child.
- Child's position is in alignment with the position held by one of the parties.

Neutrality in ADR Spaces

Impartiality means free from favouritism or bias, or from an appearance of favouritism or bias, by word, action, or association. Mediators must be committed to serving all parties, as opposed to a single party or some of the parties. (p. 5)

ADR Institute of Alberta (2011). *Code of ethical conduct for mediators: A commentary with examples and guidelines* (1994, revised 2011 Aug 2). https://www.adralberta.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Student-Page-ADRIA-Mediator-Code-of-Ethics-July-2012.pdf

Neutrality in ADR Spaces

When neutrality is understood as impartiality, power is understood to be an attribute of the mediator. [...] The presumption that power lies in relationships (which need to be kept equal) derives from the notion that power may not only be manifest in conflict but also in the suppression of conflict and differences. (p. 46)

Cobb, S., & Rifkin, J. (1991). Practice and paradox: deconstructing neutrality in mediation. *Law and Social Inquiry, 16*(1), 35-64.

Consensus Neutrality

Neutralization

The process of creating a neutral space by removing the idea of politics and the power effects of what is unspoken. Including, and especially, any ways the professional neutral may be interpreted as inherently impartial.

- Invested in harmony & axiological alignment.
- Welcoming of time with the conflict that underlies a given dispute.
- Relies on all the skills and strategies identified in dispute resolution and companion literatures as effective for moving parties forward in order to build stamina and eventually willingness and even, possibly, wanting to hold still.
- Space for grief.
- Supportive of imagination.

Value Incantations

- Determined through consensus neutrality.
- Overt statement of welcome.
- Repetition of procedures to support stated value set-points.
- Invitations grounded in value.

Invitation to Reflection

Sledge-hockey

When you first heard the sledge-hockey how did you react?

What are your thoughts and feelings now?



Consensus Neutrality

Where does getting more political land?

Someone is doing the labour of consensus. If not you, then who?

Value Awareness

What is spoken and unspoken in the space?

How much of themselves is each person able (willing, and wanting) to bring to the space?

What and who is welcome within the space?

What feels comfortable and uncomfortable in the space? For who? How do you know?

Who is supporting the comfort of others in the space? Why? How do you know?

What is and is not considered appropriate in the space? Why?

What is being neutralized in the space? Why?

04

Imagination

Invitations to elsewhere and otherwise in the here and now.

Invitations to Imagination

Aesthetic	Supporting relationship to feeling, sensing, body, and beauty.
Affirmation	Supporting relationship to sovereignty, belonging, interdependence, and value.
Prefiguration	Supporting relationship to situational stamina, and long-range creativity.
Incantation	Supporting relationship to generation, and present value inhabitation.

Invitation to Reflection

Imagination Skills

How are you supporting a sense of shared imagining?



Imagination Practice

What is your relationship to imagination?

What forms of imagining are you most practiced at?

Imagination Awareness

How am I living now as though the world is as I would wish it to be?

How am I supporting others to live now as though the world is as they would wish it to be?

How am I imagining and narrating co-existence?

How am I inviting myself and others to bring ourselves to this shared space?

What is on the very edge of what I could imagine?

Who am I in relation to someone who imagines an even further horizon?

How am I staying in deep connection to that which vitalizes me?

Thank You

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Peers, D. & Fawaz, N.V. (2024, June 10-12). *Coordinating values to support consensus neutrality - ABRIDGED* [SlideDeck]. World Mediation Summit, Edmonton, AB and online. https://adrlearninginstitute.ca/world-mediation-summit/