

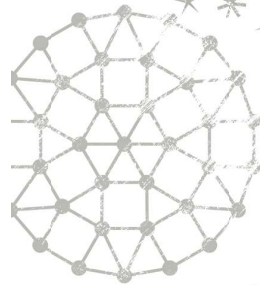
## THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH

WE BELIEVE....



### **1** CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE, VIOLENCE IS NOT.

Conflict is a natural result of human diversity. When we deal with conflict adversarially, it sparks polarization and violence. When we collaborate, conflict is transformed and catalyzes positive change.



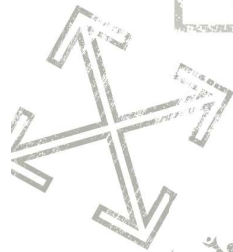
### **2** HUMANKIND IS INTERDEPENDENT.

Human beings cannot survive in isolation. Our humanity is affirmed through relationships with others. Our world is more interdependent than ever before, and the challenges before us require collaborative approaches.



### **3** CHANGE IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE.

All individuals and relationships have the capacity to change. New choices can be made, even in seemingly intractable conflicts. Each of us embodies multiple identities which are dynamic and shifting. Every conflict offers the opportunity for the transformation. All wars end.



### **4** WHEN EVERYBODY WINS, CHANGE LASTS.

When conflicts end with a winner and a loser, they often feed a cycle of violence. Enduring change arises from win-win outcomes which all parties defend.



### **5** COMMON GROUND MATTERS.

Despite the depth and complexity of our differences, we can always discover something we share. In doing so, we grow our human connection, mutual trust and respect, triggering collaboration in ways otherwise unimaginable.

# THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH

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## WHAT IS IT?

- » Common Ground Approach
- » *noun* \ 'kū-mən \ 'graiɪnd \ ə - 'prōch \.
- » The Common Ground Approach is a conflict transformation method.
- » It brings people together across dividing lines, enables them to understand their differences, discover shared interests and achieve collaborative solutions.
- » This transforms conflict without violence, catalyzing positive social change.

## WHAT DOES IT DO?

- » The Common Ground Approach catalyzes collaborative solutions, by enabling people to understand their differences and act together on shared interests to achieve a win-win outcome.
- » The Common Ground Approach brings people together across dividing lines to discover common interests and achieve collaborative solutions.

## SLOGAN/MOTTO

*Understanding Differences, Acting on Commonalities*

## HOW DOES IT DO THAT?

The Common Ground Approach enables parties in conflict to understand their underlying needs, identify areas of common interest, and build the trust to catalyze or renew relationships of dignity and respect. These relationships enable collaborative problem solving, reaching durable win-win outcomes. The conflict is re-framed to enable the stakeholders to tackle the problem rather than each other, understanding the causes, triggers and conflict dynamics. Shifts in knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and skills equip the parties in conflict to strengthen their relationships and successfully collaborate. Through lived experiences of collaboration, fear and prejudice decrease, trust is built, and the Common Ground Approach becomes self-perpetuating.

The Common Ground Approach reveals to us that we each harbor multiple identities, and that some of these are amplified at times of conflict. With listening, empathy, and conflict analysis and transformation tools, communities emerge equipped to tackle conflicts without violence. This process transforms relationships from enemies or adversaries, towards allies and collaborators. Rather than triggering violence, the conflict dynamics are transformed into drivers of societal progress, justice and equality, creating a world that works for all.

## THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH

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### WE ARE BUILDING A WORLD WHERE...

- » *Conflict is a catalyst for social change* and progress toward healthier, more prosperous and more just societies.
- » *Violence is avoided and lives are saved* because dialogue is the expected and accepted response when conflict arises.

### WHAT OUTCOME DOES THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH GENERATE?

- » Diminished attraction, acceptability and efficacy of violence, and increased aspiration and capacity for collaboration.
- » Healthier relationships across dividing lines, grounded in mutual respect and the desire for a more just society.
- » New possibilities and cooperative action across dividing lines, owned and defended by the parties to the conflict.
- » Reconciliation and a reweaving of the fabric of societies torn apart by violence and polarization.
- » Incentives for replication, by individuals and institutions, through recognizing the cost-effectiveness of collaborative as opposed to adversarial approaches.

### OUR VALUES

To create and hold a space of trust amid conflict, we must be inclusive, respecting the dignity of all sides of the conflict. We demonstrate creativity and courage, and never let go of hope in the possibility of change. We value being impartial advocates of a process – not of one side or the other. We commit to engaging long term to help transform even the most seemingly intractable conflicts.

These values are broadly shared amongst peacebuilders, development practitioners and agents of social change. In addition, we believe that in order to drive enduring change through the Common Ground Approach, we recognize the power of:

#### » EMPATHY

*We recognize the universality of people's needs and emotions, and therefore empathize with all people, irrespective of the role they have played in a conflict.*

#### » AUDACITY

*We pursue bold new approaches which may seem impossible or never before imagined.*

#### » HUMANITY

*We have faith in people. We never give up on the potential of every individual to make new choices and be positive and constructive.*

#### » HUMILITY

*We know that wisdom and insights can come from any source; we value and recognize everyone's contribution to a healthy process.*

# THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### **WE CHANGE PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS.**

The human journey of transformation is at the heart of our approach. By building skills, shifting attitudes and strengthening healthy relationships, we enable people to drive forward social change in their personal lives, families, communities and institutions.

### **WE INCLUDE PEOPLE FROM ALL SIDES OF THE CONFLICT.**

Every party to the conflict is valued. Enduring change emerges when everyone feels respected by the process and served by the outcome.

### **WE UNCOVER AND THEN BUILD ON COMMON GROUND.**

Rather than seeking compromise, we enable parties to identify shared interests, and build collaboration around commonalities. New opportunities emerge as the conflict is re-framed and people tackle the problem rather than each other.

### **WE RECOGNIZE THAT CONFLICTS ARE COMPLEX AND DYNAMIC, WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS OF POWER, HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND SYSTEMS.**

We identify entry points for change which can catalyze larger systemic changes.

### **WE ARE PRACTICAL.**

Healthy relationships breed collaboration which in turn strengthens relationships. When we enable stakeholders to identify practical avenues of collaboration, they build the skills and trust to move forward together.

### **WE ARE CREATIVE.**

We use captivating and culturally relevant ways to set trends, shift norms and encourage collaboration. We recognize the power of evocative and innovative programming to generate unimagined breakthroughs.

### **WE KNOW THAT CHANGE TAKES TIME, OFTEN ENCOUNTERS RESISTANCE, AND IS NOT ALWAYS LINEAR.**

That's why we remain engaged for the long-term, maintaining incentives for ongoing engagement by all involved in the conflict.

### **WE INSPIRE HOPE.**

People often respond to conflict with fear, avoidance or aggression. We keep hope alive, enabling people to experience new realities, renewing their confidence in themselves and others.

## WHAT IS IN THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH TRAINING?

This training equips us as individuals and as peacebuilding practitioners to transform conflict. It is applicable for interpersonal, family, or community-wide conflicts. It can help us if we find ourselves personally involved in a conflict, as well as if we seek to take initiatives to influence conflicts within our community or within a larger environment

Key skills are brought to the fore, and practiced. These include:

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### ACTIVE LISTENING

Highlighting presence, paraphrasing, and questions which seek to understand the needs and emotions that are often hidden behind the overtly declared statements and postures in a conflict.

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### EMPATHY

Highlighting how empathy enables us to create allies from adversaries, and building win-win outcomes.

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### DIGNITY

Recognizing the impact of losing, or restoring, dignity in transforming conflict.

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### CONFLICT ANALYSIS TOOLS

Analyze the conflict and identify entry points for strengthening collaboration between different stakeholders.

- » The *conflict tree* helps us to understand root causes, and distinguishing between effects, drivers, and causes.
  - » The *connector – divider tool* helps us to see where dividing lines exist, but also what is holding the community or conflict actors together.
  - » The *influencers tool* helps us to map out stakeholders involved directly, and less directly in the conflict. It enables us to see where spoilers may transform into positive influencers for peace, and where positive influencers may be amplified.
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The *concept of Common Ground* underlies this training. The combination of skills, shifts in perspective, and reflection enables us to see how conflict can be a catalyst for positive and enduring change.

## MODULE OVERVIEW

The in-person training lasts three days, and covers 11 modules

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### 1. MY IDENTITY

We each have multiple identities. They represent inherited, chosen and aspirational dimensions. Our identities are aggravated and distorted during conflict, deepening the dividing lines. We find commonalities when we recognize the diverse, dynamic and hidden facets of our identity.

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### 2. ADVERSARIAL VS. COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

We have evolved to protect ourselves and compete with others. Our society encourages us to think win-lose rather than win-win. To step out of the adversarial mindset we need to dialogue, understand each other's needs, and build trust.

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### 3. DEFINING CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

We often associate conflict with violence. Let's understand what conflict is, and what violence is, in its different physical, cultural and structural ways. Conflict can be an opportunity for positive change.

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### 4. THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE DYNAMICS IN CONFLICT

Faced with conflict, there are visible and invisible dynamics at play. We often respond to what we see or hear, rather than understanding what the other party wants or needs. This is revealed by asking the question 'why'.

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### 5. RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

Different responses to conflict will lead to different outcomes. Understanding the collaboration – beyond compromise – unlocks the win-win outcomes for enduring change.

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### 6. ACTIVE LISTENING

Listening is a gift, but also a skill that can be strengthened. Active listening, paraphrasing help us understand not just facts, but emotions and needs.

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### 7. EMPATHY AND EMPATHY BLOCKERS

We can strengthen our will and skill in being able to walk in someone's shoes and feel their emotions. A first step is being aware of one's own empathy blockers. Empathy helps us to understand the needs of the other and build relationships of trust, respect and collaboration.

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### 8. PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTIONS

What we see and understand depends on where we are situated and our prior life experiences. Recognizing that there are multiple perceptions and perspectives helps us to analyze conflict dynamics and identify common ground and win-win outcomes.

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**9. CONFLICT ANALYSIS**

Conflict analysis tools help us to understand a) root causes b) connectors and dividers and c) influencers and spoilers. These tools reveal conflict dynamics that reveal potential entry points to nourish collaborative relationships and tackle the root causes.

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**10. BUILDING COMMON GROUND**

How can I make a difference? Start by looking at the conflicts around you and identifying where collaboration can grow stronger.

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**11. HONORING DIGNITY**

Violations of dignity can lead people to choose violence. Understanding what honoring dignity means, as well as our temptations to violate it, can nourish relationships which are conscious of this powerful dynamic.

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