

Why

In every group, organization and community are strong undercurrents flowing below the surface. These undercurrents represent enormous potential for creativity but also for conflict and sabotage. Bringing undercurrents into the open in a constructive way can clear the air and open the door to authentic and new behavior.



What

A structured and powerful approach to overcoming and resolving differences and conflicts (relational or content-based) among groups or couples.

How

Step 1: Establish the rules:

- Are we willing and ready to have this conversation?
- Are we ready to say everything we have to say?
- What rules do we need to put in place to feel safe, e.g. not shouting, not running away, timeframe etc.?

Step 2: Shoot all your arrows = say everything:

- Talk about a certain topic and say everything that you feel/think about that topic.
- Talk in turn. When one side is talking and shooting arrows the other side listens without reacting or asking questions. When the first side is finished the other side takes over shooting arrows: saying what they think and feel.
- Repeat this process until everything is said (when people start to repeat themselves or when the tension decreases).
- Tips: don't be polite but be sharp and clear; don't defend yourself; give your opinion; be aware of your inner reactions (what you are feeling).

Step 3: Be honest: what has affected you most?

- Ask everyone to take a moment to reflect on the impact your own and other arrows have had on you: insights and emotions.
- Ask people to complete and share the following sentence: what struck me most was...and I realize that...is very important for me. Use "I" sentences! In a group use the popcorn method.
- Everyone needs to share at least one insight (without being defensive or seeking to explain themselves).
- Summarize the discussion in general terms: this is the collective wisdom of the parties.

Step 4: Solution: apply the wisdom gained to the issue:

- Now we know this: on what do we agree, what is our common ground?
- How can we reinforce our relationship?
- How do we now deal with the original issue?

When

When it seems impossible to come to a joint perspective or solution and opinions continue to differ.

When deeply rooted (relational) conflicts frustrate or hinder cooperation.

When there is a need for a break-through or for fresh, creative solutions.

Skills and necessary training

Expertise in facilitation.
Not being afraid of emotions.

Possible workshop exercise

Practice the method.

Critical success factors

Neutral position of the facilitator.

Consensus on:

- Nobody has the monopoly on truth.
- The aim is to stay connected.