
CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

What it's based on...

- the prerequisites and beauty of consensus are 1) trust and 2) strong unity of vision.
- in order to use consensus, the decision needing to be made must be clear, yes or no.
- consensus requires the active participation of each individual in the ongoing decisionmaking; each person has rights and responsibilities in the process.
- the facilitator is the person who, at the time, helps people listen to each other, to learn/unlearn, and to come to some fuller conclusions about the truth at hand (vs. the role of a “boss” or “chairman”)

How it proceeds...

- **facilitation:** the facilitator must be attentive to people's real feelings – are people really consenting or merely passively allowing something to happen?
- **stepping aside:** if I don't agree, I don't have to block consensus. I can express my disagreement or reservation and still go along with the decision if it isn't against my conscience; if I can “live with it.”
- **blocking consensus:** this is done only in extremely rare cases where I believe that the decision is not only against my conscience but is also objectively wrong.
- **consensus to vote:** this is possible for rare times of impasse, but it is a *consensus* to vote, i.e. the facilitator never makes a unilateral decision saying, “Ok, we'll vote on that.”
- **one to one:** if the whole group is ready for consensus and the problem/struggle is only between two people, they can be asked to deal with it on a one to one basis. When that has been done, the group can come back to the issue and see if consensus is now possible.
- **leadership skills:** facilitation, setting an agenda, note-taking, timekeeping are tools/skills that can be shared and learned by all for the sake of strengthening the whole group.