"Four Options Model: Responding to Conflict and Making Decisions"
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Class: In Ministry Project
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**Date: Dec 26, 2002**

Introduction

It has been said that 10% of your life experience is dependent on what happens to you and

90% of your life experience is based on how you respond. While this may seem like an

exaggeration, the saying certainly emphasizes the importance of how one responds, especially

when faced with conflict or a decision that needs to be made with others. The "Four Options

Model" describes the basic ways people respond.

A model, like a mathematical formula or proof, is most helpful when it is simple yet

represents a very big and complex reality. You can tell if a model is valuable by noticing if people

point to it as they talk and attempt to communicate. A model makes it possible to communicate

with fewer words and at the same time with greater clarity.   A model can help us think, analyze,

and decide about something in new ways. A good model can be understood and utilized at many

different levels of complexity. A good model stimulates dialogue which often leads to new

insights.   My experience with the "Four Options Model," including many times after drawing it on

a napkin or a scrap of paper during informal discussions, confirms all of these.

In 1988 I started work on this model which I now call the "Four Options Model" while

reading *Getting Disputes Resolved, Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict* by Ury, Brett,

and Goldberg. In that classic work, they suggest that the options for responding to conflict or

making decisions are "Power, Rights, and Interests."[1] It seemed that they were

suggesting that these were the basic categories naming "how" people respond to

a conflict. This suggestion intrigued me, perhaps because my first area of study

was mathematics (I have an MA in Mathematics). I found myself wanting to
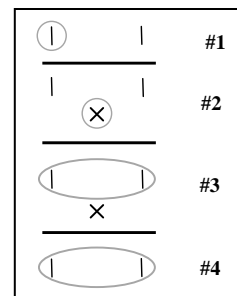
draw a diagram or picture that would illustrate these options. In my study of mathematics, I had

discovered that if I could draw a diagram or picture of a complex problem, I gained understanding

in the process and knew I understood it if I could use it to explain the problem to someone else.

While the field of Peacemaking and Conflict Studies seemed a long way from Mathematics, this

seemed like a time for attempting to draw a model.

After working on it over the next year or so, (actually I am still working on it and learning

from it) I came up with what I now call the "Four Options Model." The model I finally settled on

has some close parallels to "Power, Rights, and Interests" and some differences. I do think that

creating the model did help me understand their categories better.   I added a category and chose

not to use words in order to increase the scope of the Model.

In contrast to the three basic categories described by Ury, Brett, and Goldberg, Willmont

and Hocker in *Interpersonal Conflict* say "Once a conflict begins, each person has an almost

limitless supply of tactical options. If you were to list the possible moves that could be made, the

choices would probably reach into the hundreds."[2]

I agree with both of them. I am suggesting that these hundreds of moves, or even thousands

of moves when influenced by many different cultures, fit into four basic categories, including to

avoid, the most basic choice if one chooses not to engage. I found that the Model helps identify

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[1] William L. Ury, Jeanne M. Brett, and Stephen B. Goldberg, *Getting Disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict,* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988), pp. 4-5.
[2] Joyce L. Hocker and William W. Wilmot, *Interpersonal Conflict.* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C Brown Publishers, Third Edition, 1991), p. 99.

and make the options and role of the parties explicit. I began to use the Model to analyze my role as a mediator and to ask my clients to analyze my role.
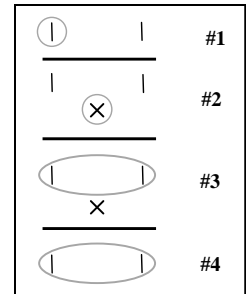
After using the Model myself, I began to use the Model as a tool when working with clients in conflict. I used it to help them identify and understand their options and decide which options they preferred and which could be back-up options. People began to tell me how helpful the Model was. We found it saved time, helped clarify roles, empowered individual disputants, and increased accountability. I have also been encouraged by wonderful stories I hear from people that have found it useful in their peacemaking and justice efforts.

I also began using the Model in my classes and training events. I often assign people in my classes and training events to introduce it to someone with whom they make decisions and then discuss how most decisions are made in that relationship and how you would prefer to make decisions. The reports I get back are encouraging. For example, a pastor reported talking with his wife about the Model. When he asked her which option she thought they usually used, she said, "I know that you think we use #4 but I usually feel it is a #1." He added, "We had a great discussion. We had never had a tool to discuss this before and we plan to use it as we make our next decisions."

I have had reports that the Model has been helpful to Kindergarten students and University conflict analysis students. It has been helpful for the novice mediator and the seasoned reflective professional mediator. It has been useful for parents with small children and attorneys with large corporate clients.

I have arranged the article in seven parts:

"Understanding the Model" - A brief introduction to the Model and Examples to test your understanding.

"Using the Model to Explore the Options" - An exploration of a wide range of options within each of the four basic options using a simple interpersonal conflict.

"Using the Model to Educate and Decide" - A number of examples illustrating how the Model has been used to help educate people regarding their options and then deciding on preferred and back-up options.
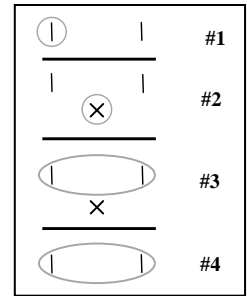
"Using the Model to Analyze and Reflect" - This is a rather advanced and abstract description of how the model can help those in the field of conflict resolution analyze and reflect on their experiences.

"Using the Model with Systems" - While the Model appears to focus on interpersonal conflict it can be used to help groups design conflict resolution structures that maximize the use of cooperation and minimize the use of coercion.

"Why don't People Use #3 and #4 More" - I suggest four reasons why cooperation is not used more.

"A Biblical Perspective" - I examine several Biblical texts as illustrations of the options and their preference for utilizing #4 and #3 as much as possible and reserving #2 and #1 as back up options.

My hope is that "The Four Options Model" will play a small role in stimulating some discussion that will lead us toward a more peaceful and just world.

Understanding the Model

To introduce the Model I will use an interpersonal conflict with just two parties. I will later describe how you can use this Model to discuss other types of conflict and with any number of parties.

Definitions

The "I's" are the people in the conflict and/or the ones needing to make a decision.

The "X's" are people (or perhaps outside objective criteria) who get involved but are not part of the conflict or one of the ones who need or want to have a decision made.
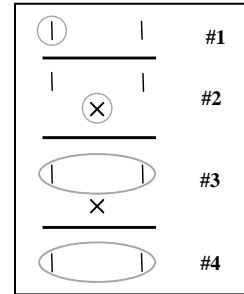
The circle or oval is around the one(s) who have the ability (for some reason) to make the decision or control the situation. The circle relates to power.

The lines between the options serve the purpose of helping clarify that when moving along the continuum between options there is a place where the decision-maker changes.

Expanding the model to think about the response options of more than two parties.

To expand the use of the model to more than two parties, just allow each "I" or "X" to represent any number of people or add as many "I's" or "X's" as needed. So there may be a situation where one person is able to make the decision for many people or some group (sometimes with more people and sometimes with less people) makes the decision for another group. In #2 the X might make a decision for two groups of any size. It is also possible in #2 that the "X," the outside authority, resides with more than one outside person or even an outside group. In #3 or #4 there might be any number of people inside the oval. In a similar way, the "X" in #3 might represent more than one person.

Illustrations and Interpretation

Option #1 is where one "I" (one of the parties in the conflict) has the ability to control the situation or make a decision that will have an effect on both. The "I" who is in the circle has the ability (for some reason) to control the situation or decision and the other "I" goes along. The ability to control the situation is often based on position that may or may not be seen as giving legitimate authority to the "I" in the circle over the "I" outside the circle. Other factors may or may not include a high degree of respect, the ability to threaten and hurt another or a substantial physical size or verbal advantage.
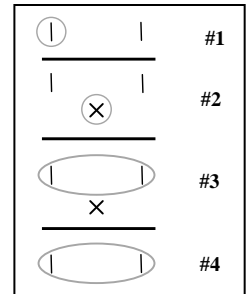
Examples:

Police officer making an arrest.

Parent and small child.

Supervisor with employee.

Fireman clearing a building.

A person with a gun making demands.

If this option has been used, when a trusted person not involved in the conflict talks to the "I" who is not in the circle, the "I" outside the circle will say something like, "it was not my decision to make" or "I had no choice" or "I had to go along." Sometimes the "I" outside the circle will be upset or even very angry and sometimes will be ok with this arrangement or even thankful.

Option #2 is where the "X," (the outside party or objective criteria) makes a decision for the "I's," the ones in the conflict or the ones needing to make a decision. The "X," may listen to the experiences, concerns and preferences of the "I's," the parties in the conflict, but the decision is made by the "X." The "I's" may both like the decision or at least accept it. But sometimes one may

like it and the other not like it, and sometimes both don't like it. Sometimes the "I's" have mutually chosen a trusted person to be the "X" and asked for a decision. Sometimes the "X" is an unknown to both parties. Sometimes one of the "I's" has chosen this way and the other has little or no choice.
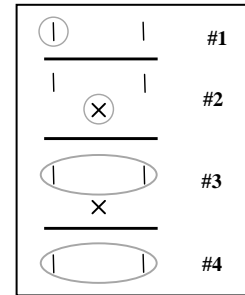
Examples:

Court with judge or jury making the decision.

Arbitrator making the decision.

A wise and trusted elder making the decision.

A vice principal making the decision for two students.

If it is really a #2, if a trusted person not involved in the conflict talks with the "I's" individually and in a very safe setting, each will say that the "X" made the decision.

Options #3 and #4 are similar in some ways and yet very different in some ways. They are similar in that the oval encircles both "I's" which indicates that the ability to make the decision resides with the two of them and not with one of them as in option #1 or with the "X" as in option #2. This means that there is no decision made or action taken until they both agree.

Option #3 includes an "X" meaning that there is some outside involvement. The role of the "X" is to assist, in some way, the "I's" inside the oval to arrive at that point where they say they agree on the decision or the action to be taken. The role of the "X" may range from presence to very active involvement in both process and content. The role of the "X" will be discussed more thoroughly in the section "Using the Model as a Tool for Analyzing and Reflecting."
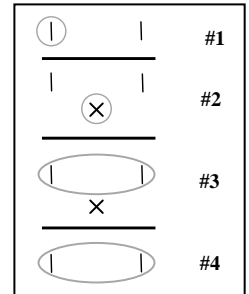
Examples:

A professional mediator with two parties who make an agreement.

Student mediators helping other students.

A supervisor helping two employees decide on how to solve a problem.

A mediator with a victim and offender who decide how to make things right between them.

If in a safe setting the "I's" say, we didn't really make the decision, it was really made by the "X," then it wasn't really a #3, it was a #2. Or, if in a safe setting, one of the parties says I didn't really have a choice because the "X" teamed up with the other "I" and they made the decision, then instead of the #3 it was really a #1 (the "X" and an "I" in one circle and the other "I" outside the circle). Or, if in a safe setting, one of the parties says I didn't really have a choice because the other "I" was the one who made the decision then it is a #1 with both the "I" and the "X" outside the circle.

Option #4 does not include an "X" meaning the decision made or the action taken is something that is agreed on by both "I's" with no outside involvement. It may not be the first choice of one or the other or both but it is something they voluntarily and cooperatively agreed on. It does not mean that their power was equal (two parties never have equal power and their power might not even be close) but it does mean that in a safe setting both would say, "yes, I know that I have other options but I decided to voluntarily go with our decision, we have an agreement."

Examples:

Two people deciding on where to each lunch together.

Two employees deciding on how to solve a problem together.

A teacher and student deciding on how to handle a homework assignment.

An employee and a supervisor solving a problem together.

If in a safe setting, one of the parties says, I really had no choice, then it wasn't really a #4, it was a #1.

More Examples:

The following situations are to help illustrate how responses to conflict can be identified as one of the four options. My interpretations are at the end. You can use these to see if you are understanding the Model. Each situation is labeled with a capital letter and the key to my interpretations is at the end of the examples.
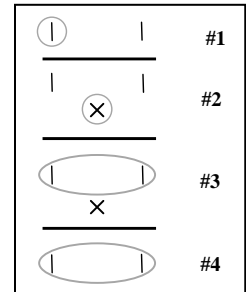
A. A boss says to an employee, do it my way or you will be fired. If the employee needs the job they may feel they have no choice and decide that they have to go along.

B. Two farmers disagree about the location of boundary between their farms. They hire a surveyor to determine the boundary for them.

C. Two young students have a conflict about who should be next to get to swing on the school swings. An older student helps them talk about their conflict and the two young students finally come to a decision they both agree on for how to solve the problem.

D. Two friends have decided to go to a movie but they each want to see a different movie. After some discussion they decide together that they will go see Movie A this weekend and Movie B the next weekend. When asked by a third friend, they both say they think this is a good plan.

E. Two astronomy club members are given a budget and assigned a task of purchasing a telescope for the club. But, they disagree over which to buy. They talk to the professor at the local University and let him decide for them which is the best telescope for the club.
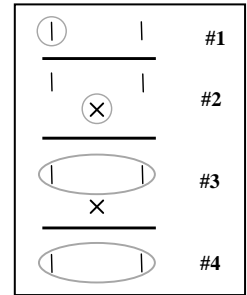
F. Two friends cannot agree on where they want to go together to eat and one leaves and says, call me tomorrow.

G. Two former business partners have a conflict about how the money left over after the dissolution of their partnership should be distributed. They ask a common friend to join them for a meeting to help them talk about it. Finally the two of them decide on what they agree is a fair and friendly way to make the distribution.

H. A child has run into the street and is in danger of being hit by a car and an adult upon seeing the danger, grabs the child and drags him to safety.

I. Two students who are creating a poster together disagree on the spelling of a word. They look it up in a dictionary and allow the spelling in the dictionary to determine how they spell it.

J. Business partners in a printing business have decided to expand their business and they have looked at a number of presses that will meet their specifications. When they each state their preference they find that they want different presses. The one has primary responsibility for the production and the other for sales. So they agree that it would be best to purchase the one preferred by the one responsible for production.
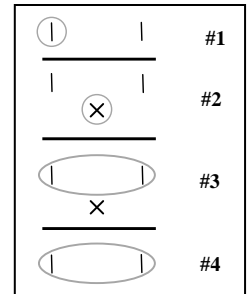
K. A man holds a gun to another man's head and demands that he give up his wallet. The person gives up the wallet.

L. A police officer arrests and takes into custody a man who has been driving extremely fast and erratically and who has failed to pass the sobriety test.

M. Spouses want to go away for the weekend but one wants to leave on Friday night and the other Saturday afternoon. After some discussion about why they want to leave at the times they first suggested, they agreed it would be best to leave Saturday morning.

N. A country is threatening to take military action against another country and says that the "gun is cocked" and it is just a matter of time. A person respected by both sides meets with the leaders of both countries and helps them work out several agreements on a number of conflictive issues and they avoid the military action.

O. In an informal soccer game, two players disagree about whether the ball is in or out when it hits the line. They look it up in the rule book and follow the rules.

P. Parents and their teenage daughter are arguing over what time she has to be in. They listen to each others concerns and search for some way of resolving it that all can agree on and eventually they find a somewhat complex and mutually agreeable solution.
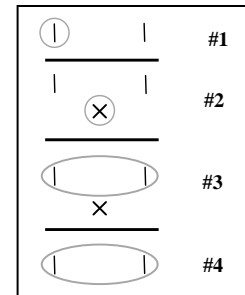
Q. A boy breaks a window in a neighbors house. Because of the incident, neighbors who were once friends are no longer talking to each other. A third neighbor invites boy and his family and the neighbors whose window was broken to his home and helps them talk about what happened decide how to make things right between them.

Key: A - #1, B - #2, C - #3, D - #4, E - #2, F - #1, G - #3, H - #1, I - #2, J - #4, K - #1, L - #1, M - #4, N - #3, O - #2, P - #4, Q - #3

Using the Model to Explore the Options

An Interpersonal Conflict

Everyone responds in some way when a conflict arises and often it is an unconscious response based on a habit or pattern that is quite predictable. We have often learned these patterns in our homes based on how our parents responded in conflict situations. Sometimes when we are fortunate these patterns are pretty helpful and constructive but sometimes they are not. The good

news is that each of us could train ourselves to not just react and to consider which option would be most helpful.

The example below is based on a personal experience. This conflict was not of earth shaking importance and we were not angry with each other. It is worth examining a small conflict since most big and destructive conflicts start from something small. They escalate into large and destructive ones because the parties in the conflict do not find a mutually satisfactory way of resolving the conflict while it is a small one.
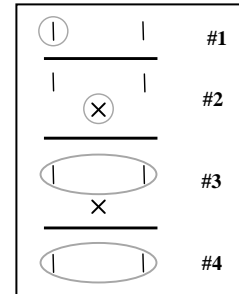
Shortly after Roxanne and I were first married, we have now been married 34 years, we volunteered with Mennonite Central Committee and moved to Nigeria where we set up our first household together. Nigeria was in the midst of a civil war and needed teachers in the north, where I taught mathematics for three years. Soon after moving into the duplex assigned to us, we discovered that we had a conflict that we hadn't been aware of before we began living together. We discovered that we had different preferences on how the toilet paper should be put on the toilet paper holder. Before we were married we had these different preferences but it was not a conflict because neither of us was blocking or interfering with the preferences of the other. But when we got married and started living together, it became a conflict. One of us preferred that the paper came over the top and the other preferred that the paper came around back and under. We each wanted it our preferred way and we had only one toilet paper holder.

The "Four Response Options Model" suggests that people in conflict have four distinct response options plus many variations in each option. Although we didn't have the Model then I will use "our toilet paper" conflict to illustrate several possible scenarios for each of the four options.

Examples illustrating how Option #1 might have been utilized to handle "our toilet paper" conflict.

A. One of us could have just turned the paper over the way we wanted it to be and not said anything. If the other turned it their way, just turn it over again. Each could have kept doing it until one would finally give in and stop turning it over.
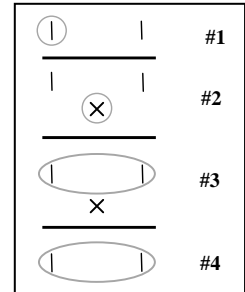

B. One of us could say, "since I clean the bathroom I have the legitimate authority to turn the paper the way I want it and you have no choice in the matter." The other might give in and might even be happy to go along.

C. One of us could threaten the other by withdrawing or withholding something. If you don't do it my way, I'm going to leave and not come back (or perhaps just say I won't talk to you or give you something you want) until you do it my way. One of us could make the threat serious enough that the other would give in. The one who would give in might think, "ok, we'll do it your way but I don't really agree and I will find a way to get back at you."

D. One of us could threaten the other with intimidation or aggressive action. If you don't do it my way, I'm going to verbally abuse or threaten you until you do it my way. One could make it serious enough that the other would give in.

The one giving in might think, "ok, we'll do it your way but only because I am

afraid of what will happen if I don't go along."

What these examples have in common is one having power over the

other. In some cases the one is attempting to dominate over the other, trying

to force the other to go along and finally the other does go along, feeling like

they had no choice. Actually the other does have other choices but has

decided for some reason to allow the other's decision to prevail. Example "B"
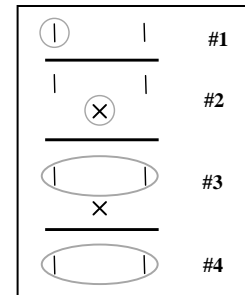
is similar to the others in that one exercises power over the other but it is different in that the way it

is done is customary, reasonable and respectful, and because of this is not as likely to cause a

power struggle. But in all cases, it is not a mutual decision because one "goes along" and does not

participate in the decision.

Roxanne and I each tried a version of #1 for some time. Each of us would turn the toilet

paper the way we preferred having it on the holder. The other might leave it for a while and then

turn it the other way. At first when we talked about it we did so jokingly. Neither of us gave up

and neither of us escalated it to the threat or insult level to try to get our way. So we didn't finally

resolve it using #1. We actually used a variation of #2. We have enjoyed that conflict ever since

and our relationship is closer because of it.

Examples illustrating how option #2 could be utilized to handle "our toilet paper"

conflict.

A. We could agree to talk to seven (or any odd number we agree on) different

families, where we don't already know how they hang their toilet paper. We

could ask them how they hang their toilet paper and agree in advance to do it

the way that the majority of them do it.

B. We could flip a coin and let the coin toss decide for us.

C. We could look at a variety of toilet papers with colored designs

on them to see if the way the paper is printed tells us how the

manufacturers think it should be hung. We could then look for

several different manufacturers and see if they all agree. We could then to do

it their way if it is clear and if they agree.
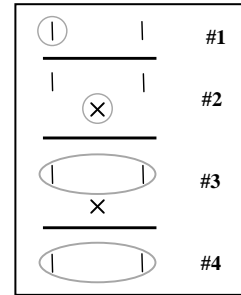
What all of these examples of option #2 have in common is that they rely on an outside

authority to make the decision for us. Option #2 is usually less stressful than option #1 and it also

provides a way to save face since neither party is giving in to the other party but rather allowing

the outside party to make the decision.

Although we didn't know about this Model when we did this, it allowed me to give in

gracefully. Neither of us dominated or dictated the solution. We used method "C" above. We

agreed on the process (actually this part was a #4). We relied on an authority outside of ourselves.

We found a store that had printed-paper where you could discern how the manufacturer intended

for the paper to be placed on the roll. So, for the last 34 years, we have been doing it that way.

(Which way is left as a research project for the reader who is interested.)

<u>Examples illustrating how option #3 could have been utilized to handle "our toilet paper" conflict.</u>

A. We could each select one friend and jointly select one friend that the two of us could both agree on to help <u>us</u> talk about and work on finding a solution to this conflict we can both agree on.
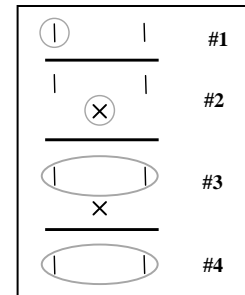

B. We could invite our pastor and spouse to join us for a meal. Then, in their presence we could discuss the situation and maybe because of their presence, we would talk in more conciliatory tones and more constructively so that the two of us could find some resolution we could both voluntarily accept.

C. We could go to the local mediation center for a mediator who would help us discuss the matter. Perhaps, their skills and strategies could help us come to some solution we could agree on.

What all of these #3 examples have in common is that they have at least one outsider helping the two come to a voluntary agreement. The involvement of the "X" can vary greatly. The "X" might help just through their presence as in example B or the "X" might actively help the parties discuss the situation. The "X" might do this very informally or very formally. They might lead a very structured or unstructured process. The "X" might make some suggestions or even put pressure on one or both of the parties. What this suggests is that there is a continuum in #3 ranging from almost a #4 to almost a #2. This continuum and the role of the "X" is discussed more

thoroughly in the section on "Using the Model to Analyze and Reflect." To be an option #3 the

decision must be made by the parties, not by the "X" and both of the parties must be able to say in

a safe setting that they voluntarily agreed.

Examples illustrating how option #4 could be utilized to handle "our

toilet paper" conflict.
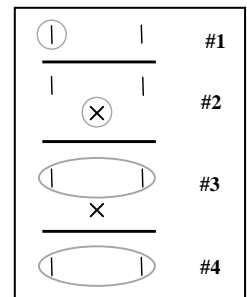
A. We might discuss a number of ways to compromise and stop the

constant turning over of the toilet paper. For example, we might

agree that the one who replaces the empty roll can put it on however they wish

and the other will leave it that way until it needs to be replaced again. We

might listen to each other's concerns and after brainstorming several

possibilities, decide what **we** want to do.

B. After attending a seminar on conflict resolution, we might agree to follow the

process outlined for cooperatively reconciling our interests and using that

strategy come to a resolution we both like and voluntarily agree to follow.

C. One of us might say that since we have been turning it over and over, I have

decided I really like your way better and so we agree to do it that way for the

future.

D. We might discuss a way that someone else could make the decision for us and

agree to do it however the outside authority decides.

What all of the examples of #4 have in common is that through some
process on our own, we come to a place where we both voluntarily agree that we
have an acceptable solution. The difference between a #3 and #4 is that in #4
nobody outside of the conflict is present, helping us to discuss it or leading a
process to help us come to our agreement.
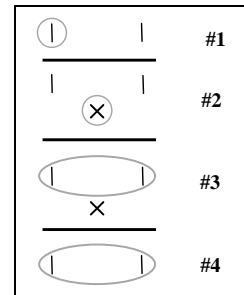
Example D is variation on a #4 in which the parties agree on a process using an outside
authority to make the final decision. This is actually what we did.

In option #4 the formality and the structure of the process can substantially vary and still
be within option #4. The parties might just talk informally or they might carefully follow a very
prescribed strategy. One of them might be the designated leader of the process or they might
informally share the leadership. Each might be very interested in the concerns of the other and
they might try to meet as many concerns as possible of both. Each might compromise or give a
little in order to get a little and in that way find agreement. Each might put some pressure on the
other to make it somewhat uncomfortable for the other as a way of trying to get them to agree.
But, if it is a #4, in the end, in a safe setting, both would say that they voluntarily agreed. If one
said that they did not voluntarily agree, then it was really a #1. As with a #3, there is a continuum
in #4 that ranges between a #3 and #1.

To be a #3 or #4 both must voluntarily agree. If one of the persons in a safe setting told
someone, "I had to go along, I was overpowered, or I felt I had no choice," then, although the
intention was to use #3 or #4, it was actually #1. Sometimes one of the parties or an outside party

thinks that it was a #3 or #4, but if one of the parties in a safe setting says it was really a #1, then that is what it was. When attempting to use #3 or #4, one doesn't known if it was accomplished until each party, in a safe setting, agrees that it was a #3 or #4. This decision belongs to the parties, not to the "X."
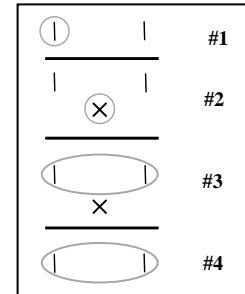

Using the Model to Educate and Decide

When there is a conflict or a decision to be made, the Model suggests that the parties have four basic response options, and whether or not they consciously choose one of them, they will utilize at least one of them.

A High School Teacher/Student Example

To encourage the teachers in my classes to experience the difference between just doing the usual in a conflict situation and consciously using the Model to educate and decide, I give an assignment. In every classroom there is a student that makes life difficult for the teacher. When this student is absent, the teacher is not too disappointed. What I ask each teacher to do is to identify this student, describe one of the problems with this student, explain the model to the student, and invite this student to consider resolving the problem together using #4.   The next class we listen to their experiences. Below is one example.

A high school teacher identified a student who was disruptive almost every time

she started a lecture to introduce a new concept to the class. She had tried the

usual discipline things and his behavior hadn't changed and their relationship was

continuing to deteriorate. He was very uncooperative. She identified the problem

and introduced him to the model. When she asked him which option they were

currently using he identified #1. When she asked him if he would

like #4 he said yes without hesitation. She said it made her mad

when he chose #4 because that is what she had wanted all along.

On the other had, she was very glad he wanted #4. Having

established that they would use #4, they followed a process to

recognize what had been happening, to decide on a future course of action, and to

make things right between them. She now reports enjoying seeing him walk in
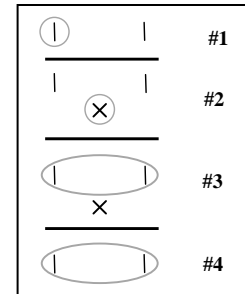
the class.
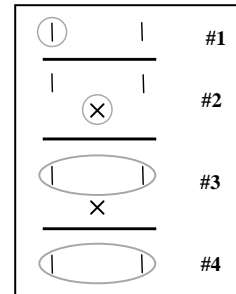
A Community/Medical Group Example

I am sometimes invited to work as a mediator with groups on policy issues. A

group of medical organizations (represented by their CEO's) and concerned community

groups (represented by their leaders or attorneys) needed to make a decision because of a

state policy change. The financial stakes were high for the medical organizations. The

decision would have significant impact on the quality and quantity of service for the poor

in the community. I was invited as a facilitator because they were frustrated after several

meetings in which some people got very angry at others in the group. In addition, some

had walked out in each of the previous meetings. In our introductory meeting I started by

introducing two models, one of which was the "Four Options Model."

After introducing the Four Options Model the participants were invited to discuss

which of the option they preferred. Their reporting revealed that some wanted the group

to just go along with their view (#1), others wanted to vote and go with the majority (#1),

others wanted to bring in an expert to decide (#2) and others wanted a consensus (#4 or #3). After discussing their situation using the model, they decided to invite me as a mediator to help them try for a consensus. They agreed that if anyone wanted to abandon the consensus (#3), they would bring in an expert to share their opinion (#2) and then they would vote (#1). We all worked together for 6 two-hour meetings and arrived at a consensus.

An Eighth Grade Classroom Example

Roxanne, my wife, has been utilizing the Model in her classroom to educate and decide for 10 years now. Instead of utilizing it selectively or when it is convenient, she has incorporated it into her classroom structure.

Roxanne teaches the "Four Response Options Model" to all of her eighth grade students. In addition she tells them that some conflict is a normal thing and will happen in their classroom. Some of this conflict will be between her and the student. If an informal #4, a usual reminder and/or referring to their classroom respect agreement, does not resolve it, she would prefer they try again with a more formal #4 rather than resorting to #1. She also lets them know that she cannot do #4 by herself and she cannot force them to work with her at #4 because if she did, she would really be doing a #1. So, if they have a conflict, she will invite them to consider trying to do a #4 with her. If they agree to try #4, they set a time and follow a strategy designed to help them work together in a fair and constructive way. If they find agreement, then they write it up and have as many follow-up meetings as they need to help each of them keep their agreements.

(Habits are sometimes difficult to change, even when we want to.) If

they do not find agreement at #4 then she is open to seeking a mediator

to help them try #3.   If the student is also willing to try #3, then they

will find a mutually agreeable mediator or mediators. If a student is

unwilling to try #4 or #3 she compassionately educates them regarding the

implications of their choices and encourages them to reconsider. If they are not

willing to work with her at #3 or #4 that leaves only #2 or #1.   If there is a safety

or chaos situation she will act to restore safety and reasonable order utilizing #2 or

#1 if necessary but still using no more force than necessary and still being

reasonable and respectful. Once safety and order are restored, she will follow that

up with an invitation to #4 or #3. She is open to having them remind her about

being respectful, reasonable, and restorative whether they are at #1, #2, #3, or #4.
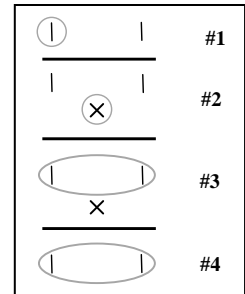

Roxanne reports that this method of responding to conflicts in class helps them

create a very respectful climate where the negative, long lasting stress and power

struggles are eliminated or greatly reduced. She also notes that although each

situation takes some time to work it through, she is convinced that in addition to

reducing stress, utilizing these methods is more efficient. She is able to get more

teaching time and waste less time in unproductive power struggles and attempts to

control a disruptive student. Roxanne also reports that when she uses this

method, each significant conflict becomes a teaching and learning situation for

both her and her students. This reduces stress because she is not "wasting time"

dealing with a disruptive student because each of these situations is transformed

into teaching/learning opportunities. She also believes that this highly
cooperative approach for responding to conflict carries over to the academic
performance as well. She thinks students are more open to learning.

Two Common Questions:

But what about power differences?

A common question is if it is really possible to do #3 or #4 when the
one has substantially more power than the other, as with a teacher and student.
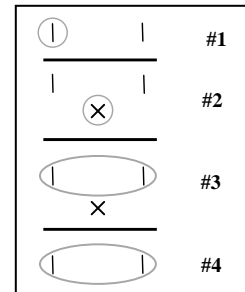
I am suggesting that a #3 or #4 can happen even when the parties have substantially
different access to power. Power (the ability to influence) is different for each individual. Some
power comes from position in an organization, some from information, some from verbal ability,
some from size, some from financial resources, some from race or gender, some from experience,
etc. This is not an exhaustive list but is intended to indicate that no two people ever have the same
amount of power. The power differential is huge between a teacher and very young students but
even at eighth grade a teacher still has many power advantages.

When the power is substantially in favor of one, to use a #3 or #4 the one with the greater
power has to make a conscious choice not to use it to dominate (power over) or make the other go
along. Instead, they use their sources of power to empower (power with) the other(s) so they can
arrive as close as possible at a mutually satisfactory agreement. Remember, it is not a #3 or #4
until, in a safe setting, each party agrees that it really is a #3 or #4.

When introducing the #4 idea to teachers and other supervisors, a common
misunderstanding often happens. The one who has the ability (positional authority) to be inside the
circle in #1, often feels like they are moving from inside the circle to outside the circle when they
consider moving from #1 to #4. It is essential to recognize the difference. If one stays in #1 and

simply trades places with the other person, one is giving up their power in that situation and giving it to the other. This is often described as permissiveness. But moving to #4 is very different. In consciously deciding to move from a #1 to a #4, the one with the greater power is inviting the other to join them in making a decision that both can agree on. In this case, both are fully empowered and no decision is made until they both agree. Again, #1 is *power over* and #3 or #4 are *power with*.
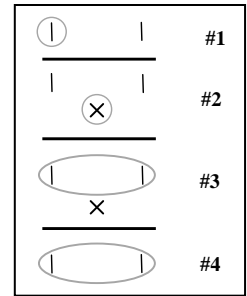
Why So Much Focus on *Agreements*?

There has been some discussion about what is more important, agreements or empowerment and recognition. I think that both are important.

Empowerment of all of the parties and recognition of ones concerns, fears, and interests by the other party are very important.[3] If parties in conflict don't experience empowerment and recognition they miss an opportunity for significant growth.[4] I also think significant empowerment and recognition are essential to accomplish a #3 or #4 agreement. Without empowerment and recognition it is very likely that at least one of the parties, in a safe setting, will say that it was really a #1 or #2 rather than a #3 or #4.
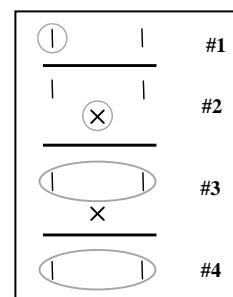
The reason agreements are so important is because they are so closely related to trust. And trust is something that I think is essential in right relationships. "Trust goes up when agreements are made and kept and trust goes down (becomes distrust) if parties are unwilling to make

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[3] Robert A. Bush and Joseph P. Folger. *The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict Through Empowerment and Recognition.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), p. 2
>*Empowerment:* The restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems.
>*Recognition:* The evocation in individuals of acknowledgement and empathy for the situation and problems of others.

agreements or if they make agreements and don't keep them."[5] Think about people you trust and

you will notice that they are willing to make agreements with you and keep them. Think about

people you distrust and you will notice that they are unwilling to make

agreements with you or if they do, you can't count on them keeping the

agreements.

This is one reason why #3 and #4 are so important for relationships

and systems. When #3 and #4 are utilized frequently, many agreements are

made and trust goes up. Without them, agreements are not made and trust goes down. At #1 and

#2 there are many assumed agreements that are not clear or not accepted as agreements by at least

one of the parties. This lack of clarity means that the assumed agreements are usually not kept and

trust goes down.

Since trust grows when agreements are made and kept, follow-up on agreements is

essential. If the agreement has been kept, a follow-up meeting is a time to acknowledge that and

celebrate. Trust grows when this happens. Some trust grows when the agreements are made but it

makes its greatest growth when the parties acknowledge that the agreements that were made have

been kept. If the agreement has not been kept, a follow-up meeting will provide a time for

recognition of that and a chance to re-negotiate and repair the damage.

Sometimes in less formal mediations or negotiations, agreements are arrived at but are not

written. There is a part of me that likes this because *my word* that I am going to do something is

enough. It doesn't need my signature on an agreement form to make me do what I have agreed to

do. I also know that many times when an agreement is not written, each party leaves with good

intentions and with their own interpretation of what the agreement was. Then, as each implements

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[4] Ibid., p. 249

[5] Claassen, Ron. "Trust "Building," *VORP News.* March 1992

what they thought the agreement was and notices what the other is doing, each thinks that the other is not keeping the agreement. So the good intentions actually lead to a decrease in trust because each thinks the other is not keeping the agreement. I prefer to err on the side of writing the agreement to prevent this possibility of losing trust and missing the opportunity for increasing trust.
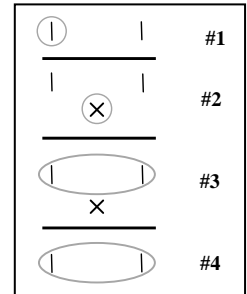
Using the Model to Analyze and Reflect

I have been amazed at how helpful it is for people to be able to look at the Model and point while talking. It seems to make it easier to clarify ones thoughts. One example where this has been particularly true is in discussions regarding facilitative and evaluative mediation. This will be discussed in some detail in the section below on the role of the "X" in #3.

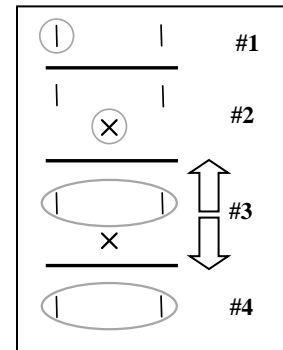What follows is an analysis of each of the options and a particular focus on the role of "X" in #3 and #2.

As mentioned earlier, there is a continuum between each option. The lines between the options serve the purpose of helping clarify that when moving along the continuum between the options, for example from #3 toward #2, there is a place where the decision is no longer made by the parties and is then being made by the "X."

There is also a continuum within each option. In the illustration I have added some lines with arrows to illustrate the continuum within each of the options. I am going to be using the continuum in #3 and #2 to analyze the role of the "X." Remember that the final judges of whether the decision was a #1, #2, #3, or #4 are the parties. If, after the process is complete, one of the parties, in a very safe setting, says that they really did not agree with or at least voluntarily accept the decision/agreement that was made, then it cannot be a #3 or #4, it must have been a #2 or #1. If

the intent was a #2 but one of the "I's" says that they feel the "X" joined with the other "I" rather than making a fair and independent choice, then it was really a #1.

Analyzing Option #3

In #3 the "X" is the outside person or persons who assists the "I's," however many "I's" are inside the circle, as they attempt to find agreement. One thing that is clear in #3 is that the "X" is not one of the decision-makers. Beyond this, the role of the "X" who is often called a mediator, may change. One mediator may describe the role of the "X" and it may sound very different from another person describing the role of the "X." In addition, the role of a particular "X" may change throughout the course of a meeting or between meeting(s). If we look at the vertical continuum ranging from the line at #4 to the bottom line at #2, we can use the Model to help us analyze the role of the "X" in #3.

As the "X" moves up on the continuum in #3, getting closer to #2, the "X" would begin acting in ways that look more and more like a #2 "X." The "X" might start to make more content suggestions or might move people into separate groups and carry information between them. As "X" moves closer to #2, "X" exerts more and more influence, not only on process but also on content, but stops short of making the decision. If the parties say that the "X" made the decision, then although "X" set out to help them do #3, they really did #2. But, it is possible for "X" to move very close to #2 and still, the parties in the circle, in a safe place, indicate that they made the decision.

As the "X" moves down on the continuum in #3, getting closer to #4, the "X" would begin to disappear or become almost invisible in the process. It might be that the parties are working so

well together, that the "X" basically sits back and lets them do it with almost no influence on either process or substance. It may be that the "X's" presence (perhaps one or more highly respected people) is enough to cause the parties to be able to work well together, when it might be that they couldn't have without the presence of "X."

Some mediators/facilitators have never really thought about where they are on the continuum and what difference it might make. Others are very sensitive to where they are on the continuum and move as needed to assist the parties. Some "Xs" are very convinced or very stuck in one style or strategy and they do not move at all on the continuum. Some "Xs" move a lot on the continuum, searching for what will work but they are not aware of their movement. Some "Xs" tell the parties where they are on the continuum and others don't reveal this or don't even educate their parties about this continuum.
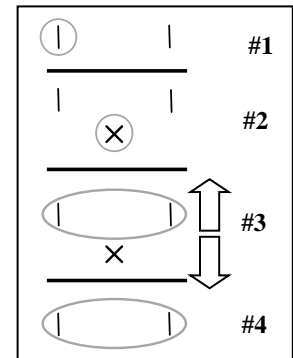
One value of a model is to help talk about ideas and experiences. One value of this Model is to use it to increase awareness of and discuss the potential movement of "X" on the continuum.

One could use the Model to interview a potential "X." When I am an "I" in a #3, I want to know where the "X" intended to be on the continuum. Will the "X" move during the meeting and will they do it at the request of the parties? Will the "X" suggest movement on the continuum when it seems it would be helpful? If an "X" doesn't have answers to these questions or hasn't thought about movement on such a continuum, I would be very unlikely to choose that "X."

Following are some questions I think need further discussion. When does an "X" have an obligation to disclose this vertical continuum to the parties, perhaps as part of the description of one's role? Is the value or strength of the agreement of the parties higher or better depending on whether the agreement is made closer to #2 or #4? Is the goal in a #3 to get agreement of the

parties or to move toward #4 or does it make a difference?   Where does empowerment and

recognition as discussed in *Promise of Mediation* happen?[6] Does the artistry described in *The*

Making of a Mediator relate to the positioning on the continuum?[7] Where is facilitative and

evaluative mediation on the continuum? What is the mediators role in encouraging the parties'

consideration of objective criteria as described in *Getting to Yes*?[8]

A reflective "X" can utilize the model for discussion during and after a

mediation, to check in on the perspective of the parties and the "X" and seeing

how close they are. Some Co-Mediators have a very difficult time working

together and others work well together. It seems to me that co-mediators will

benefit from a discussion about the continuum.
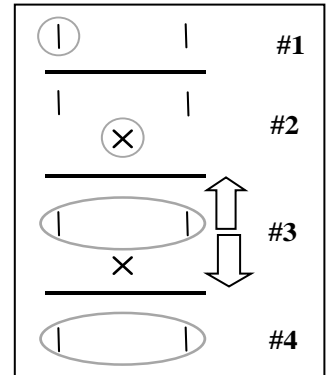
Since the "Is" are the decision makers and final judges of the process

they have ultimate control and can ask the "X" to move on the continuum or, if the "I's" do not

approve of the location or movement of the mediator on the continuum, they are free to select a

new "X."

Analyzing the "X" in Option #2

In #2 the "X" makes the decision for the "I's," however many there are. Since I do not act

as an "X" in #2, except in occasional informal settings, I suspect that I am still not aware of many

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[6] Bush and Folger. *The Promise of Mediation*, p. 2
   Empowerment: The restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own
    capacity to handle life's problems.
   Recognition: The evocation in individuals of acknowledgement and empathy for the situation and problems of
    others.
[7] Michael D. Lang and Alison Taylor, *The Making of a Mediator: Developing Artistry in Practice,* (San Francisco:
Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 18.
   To attain artistry requires three essential elements: (1) practice skills, (2) theoretical knowledge, and (3) the
    ability to make useful and appropriate connections between theory and practice.
[8] Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In,* (New York: Penguin
Books, 1991), p. 81-94.

of the nuances of moving on this vertical continuum in #2. It was a discussion with a judge that stimulated me to think about the movement in #2. I will be describing what I think the model suggests.

As the "X" in #2 moves closer to #1, the "X" is more inclined to side with one of the "I's," at least, as viewed by the "I" who feels least heard and least favored in the decision and especially by the one who views the decision as unfavorable. Very near the line but still in #2, one "I" would almost be inclined to say that the "X" and the other "I" were in the same circle, but that they stopped just short of that. If at least one party viewed the "X" and the "I" in the same circle, from that party's perspective, the "X" moved across the line and although the intention was to do a #2, it was really a #1. This is often the feeling of one of the parties in #2 and why the opportunity to appeal the decision of the "X" is so important.
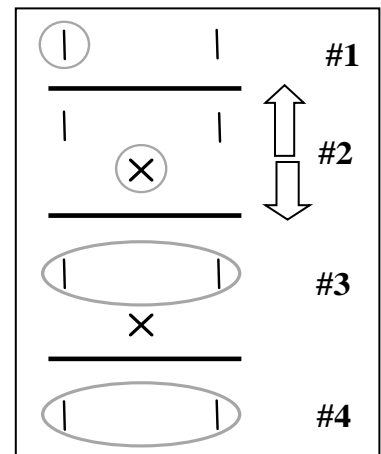
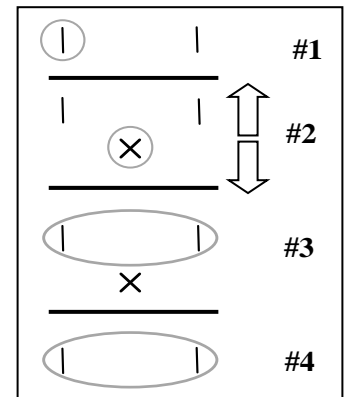As the "X" moves down on the continuum toward #3 the parties will view the "X" as a better listener and as seeking and utilizing more of their input. Very near #3 the parties would almost feel it was their decision. It would seem that the likelihood of an appeal would be substantially less when the decision is made close to a #3.

In the middle of the continuum, the "X" would be viewed as making a very fair (not favoring one or the other "I") and independent choice. The decision is clearly made by the "X" but not without input from each with equal consideration for the concerns of both.

As the "X" moves up from middle the "X" seeks less information and spends less time trying to understand the perspective of one of the parties. As the "X" moves down on the

continuum from the center, the "X" devotes more time to listening and working on understanding the interests and concerns of all of the parties.

As in our discussion of the "X" in #3, we need to ask the question, does it make a difference where, on the continuum, the "X" is in a #2? I am convinced that to an "I" it does make a difference. If the decision is made very near #1, the "I" almost inside the circle with the "X" then it may feel great, at least temporarily, or it may feel unfair and unnecessary. For the "I" outside the circle it is clear that the decision would feels very unfair. If one "I" thinks it was really a #1 or even almost a #1, the option of appealing the decision and having it heard by another "X," one more inclined to listen the their side of the story, would seem essential. If the decision is made very near a #3, I suspect that both "Is" will be fairly happy with the decision. If it is in the middle, I suspect that both sides will at least think it is fair, even if they don't like the decision.

Is it necessary for a #2 "X" to know where they are on the continuum? Yes, I think that a reflective "X" would always monitor themselves and pay attention to this. It would be very helpful to the "X" to know so that they can make an adjustment, especially if they are close to a #1. I suspect that a reflective and artistic "X" in #2 prefers making the decision as close to #3 as possible and would not want to move above the center point. It would be helpful for an "X" in #2 not only to monitor themselves but also to check out the perception of the parties on where they view the "X" on the continuum. The final outcome, whether or not the decision is one that is helpful in resolving the problem and is carried out, will be influenced by the perception of the parties. It is more likely the decision will be helpful and not appealed to another authority if the "I's" view the "X" as in the middle or closer to #3.

Analyzing Option #1

(I have found it most helpful when using the Model to analyze #1 and #4 to modify the Model a bit. What I have done is to bend the linear Model around until #1 and #4 touch, making a circle.)

To explore #1 I find it most helpful to start by defining the middle point. The middle point is the point when "I" inside the circle, the one who has the ability to coerce the other by some means, focuses only on their own concerns and interests and gives no consideration to the interests and concerns of the "I" outside the circle or to what some outside authority might think.
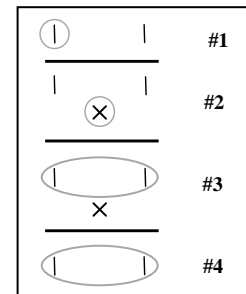
As the movement is toward #2, the "I" in the circle begins to add the concerns and ideas of some outside authority to their own concerns. Closer to #2, outside authority is given more influence. Close to the line of #2, the decision is one that would probably be approved by the outside authority but is still made by the "I" inside the circle. The interests and concerns of the "I" outside the circle would still have no influence except as they might be considered by the outside authority. If the "I" outside the circle approved of and valued the opinion of the outside authority being considered by the "I" inside the circle, the decision might be increasingly acceptable as the authority is given more and more consideration. If the "I" outside the circle does not approve of the outside authority and value the opinion of that outside authority, then the consideration of the outside authority would not make the decision become any more acceptable.
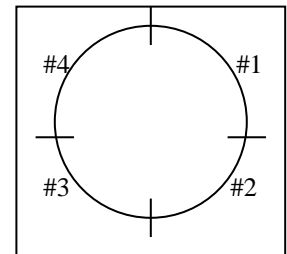
As #1 moves from the center toward #4, the "I" in the circle, the "I" who has the ability to coerce the other, begins to consider the interests and concerns of the other party. Close to the line,

it would almost seem like the one outside the circle has agreed, although, they would still, in a safe setting say the "I" outside the circle did not have any choice, the other one made the decision. It is more likely that the "I" outside the circle would feel better about the decision though, because of the consideration given by the "I" inside the circle, to the concerns of both sides.

Moving toward the center of the continuum means the "I" in the circle is exerting more power over the other "I." Moving toward the center on the continuum means the "I" in the circle considers the other's perspective and concerns less and less. What becomes important to the "I" inside the circle is for the decision to be made without any consideration for the other "I" and/or opposed to the concerns of the "I" outside the circle. The "I" outside the circle has less and less positive influence on the decision as the movement is toward the center of the continuum.
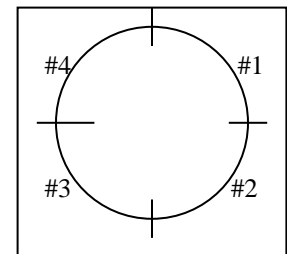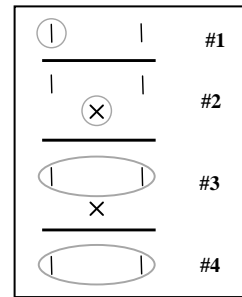
Analyzing Option #4

Option #4 is a where both (or all) of the "I's," in a very safe setting, say they agree. It may or may not be the preference any of the "I's," but in the end, they decide they agree with the decision. This kind of agreement, is often called a consensus, especially when there are more than a few parties.

Again, I find defining the middle point is a helpful place to start in analyzing the continuum between #1 and #3. The middle point is where all parties come to a mutual agreement with almost no reservations and no sense that the other(s) are in any way putting pressure on them to go along. The agreement is one that they all arrived at together, perhaps after only a little discussion or

perhaps after a prolonged discussion, but at the time of decision or agreement they are equally

favorable about the agreement.

Power is always a factor. This is not trying to suggest that the parties

have equal power coming into the decision-making process. I don't think that

two parties ever have equal power. One is usually more verbal than the other.

One has more information than the other. One has more connections to others

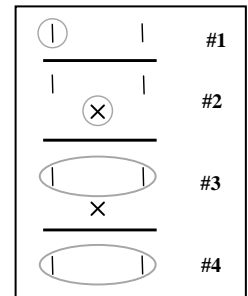with power than the other. One may have more positional power due to the
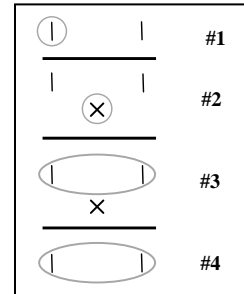
hierarchy if they are in the same organization. So finding an agreement in the middle of #4 is not

dependent on the "I's" having equal power. This middle point of option #4 is the result of "I(s)"

with more power voluntarily not utilizing it to over power the other(s). At the middle point in #4,

the one with the greater power uses it to benefit all of the "I's" and to help empower the other(s). In

this middle point on the continuum, each "I" monitors themselves, their use of power, and invites

and is open to the other(s) also helping to monitor and maintain constructive use of power.

For the "I's" to arrive at a #4 middle point agreement might only require a very informal

discussion. If that is all that is needed the agreement may be arrived at very quickly and

celebration is in order. However, in many cases, an informal discussion is not enough. Sometimes

a #4 is abandoned because the parties lack any strategies beyond informal discussion to help them

work toward a cooperative decision. It is possible for two people or a group to agree to a process

or strategy and this might allow one of their members to lead it. While one party is allowed to lead

the process, in this middle point of option #4, all "I's" will be invited to be constantly evaluating the

power and fairness issues. Is the leader using the leadership to unfairly influence the decision? At

this middle point of #4, the leader and others will frequently check in on the perception of the

others because they want to be sure that power is not being used to over power, even inadvertently, by any "I."

Movement on the continuum towards #1, means the leader or one or more of the other "I's" have utilized their power to influence the decision without giving equal consideration to the concerns of the other(s). Very close to #1, at least one of the "I's" feels like the decision was almost made by one or more of the other "I's." But if this "I" still decides (perhaps with some pressure) to go along with and agree to the decision and in a very safe setting would say, yes, I agree with this decision, then it is still a #4. The closer along the continuum toward the center, the more all of the "I's" feel like they had equal opportunity to influence the decision and voluntarily agreed to the decision.

Movement along the continuum toward #3 means that the "I's" are finding it helpful to think about how they would talk and make a decision if outsiders were present or even leading the process. Since #3 is really just a #4 with some outside presence or help, it is also helpful to realize that movement toward #3 is also movement toward #2. This would mean that the "I's" are finding it helpful to consider more outside criteria or outside authority and allowing it to have more influence on their decision. As movement is in the direction of #2, the decision is influenced more and more by the outside criteria or outside authority and less by one of the "I's." Movement in this direction means outside criteria or other outside authority is given more and more influence over the decision to the point where it would almost appear that the decision was made by the outside influence. However, to be a #4, it must still be that when each "I" is asked in a safe setting, each agrees with the decision.

Commitment to follow through with keeping an agreement or a decision will be high anywhere along the continuum in #4 and will be highest when it is in the middle.

Using the Model with Systems

Every system; family, business, school, classroom, school district, faith community, city, country, etc.; uses all of these options at times, even if they have not consciously chosen them. I also think each system has preferences. Some use one option more than the others and yet finally use some combination of all of these four ways of handling their conflicts.
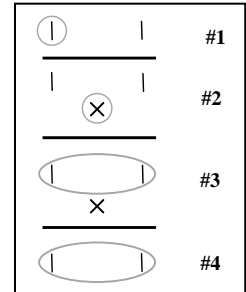

Systems could choose which options they prefer and in what order they will utilize them to make their decisions or handle their conflicts. System leaders need to examine their structures to determine which options their structures require or encourage and in what order.

System leaders could redesign their structures to encourage and facilitate the use of #3 and #4 as much as possible and reserve #2 and #1 for back up after #3 and #4 have been tried.
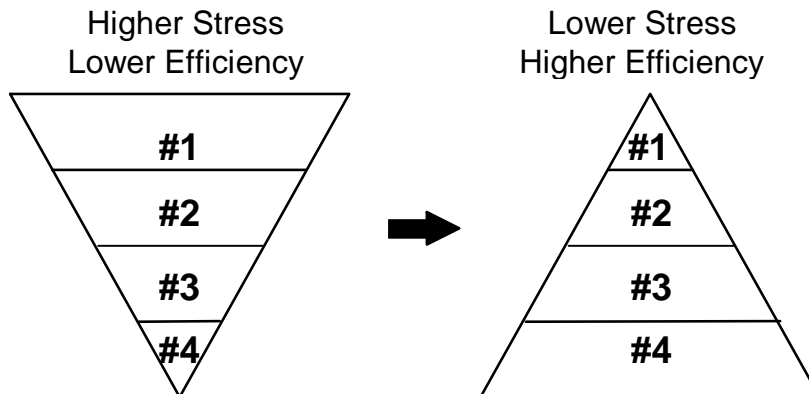
The figure above is intended to illustrate that all systems use some combination of all four of the response options and that some options are used more than others. The amount of space is intended to indicate the relative amount of use. The triangle with its base at the top (the one on the left) indicates that #1 is used most and #4 is used least. In this kind of system, it is also likely that

#1 or #2 are used first and are preferred by the leadership in the system and it is only if there is resistance that they move to #3 or #4. The triangle with its base at the bottom (the one on the right) illustrates a system where #4 is used most and #1 is used least. In this system #3 and #4 are preferred by the leaders and used as a first response and #2 and #1 are only used if there is a safety situation or if #4 and #3 have been tried and the group has decided to move to #2 or #1.
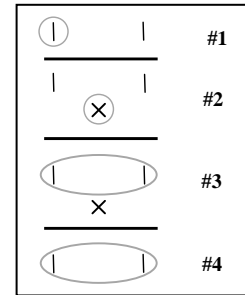
Ury, Brett, and Goldberg in *Getting Disputes Resolved* described three options as power, rights, and interests.[9] Given their definitions power, is similar to #1, rights similar to #2 and interests similar to #3 or #4. (As I mentioned early in the article, I am indebted to them for their ideas which caused me to seek a model, at first to simply understand their ideas better and later to make new discoveries. I prefer using the "Four Response Options Model" because it is more general, not tied to the language, and because power is a factor in all options.)

From their research in the coal mining industry, they generalized that there are some things that are predictable if we know the frequency of use of their three ways in a system. Their research said that the stress was reduced and the efficiency increased when power was used least frequently and as a backup, interests used first and most frequently, and rights utilized after interests failed but before resorting to power.[10]

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[9] Ury, Brett, and Goldberg, *Getting Disputes Resolved,* pp. 4-5.
[10] Ibid., pp. 17-19

Higher Stress / Lower Efficiency → Lower Stress / Higher Efficiency
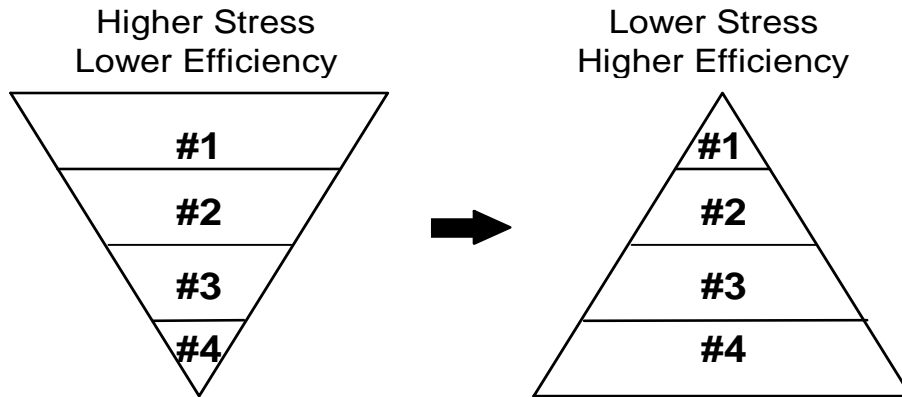
I also think that stress is reduced and efficiency and effectiveness is increased in all systems (work, school, criminal justice, family, faith community) when system leaders prefer the triangle on the right and design their structures to support and encourage utilizing #3 and #4 most and using #2 and #1 as back-up. My experience, many anecdotal reports, and some formal and informal research confirm these results.
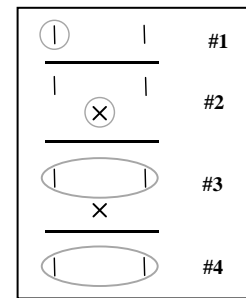
Those who are not part of the conflict but for some reason have a stake in its outcome, can encourage the parties to make a conscious choice and may even require them to consider all options. One effective way for an outside person who has a stake in a constructive outcome is to introduce the model (perhaps to each separately at first) to help the parties consider which option they would prefer or think would be most helpful and fair. The outsider might even attempt to influence them to use a particular option.

In #2 the power resides with the outside authority. One way to arrive at #2 is though a #3 or #4 where there is a voluntary agreement from all parties to utilize an outside authority to arrive at a decision or agreement. Another way to arrive at #2 is when one side appeals to the authority and the other is compelled or coerced (#1) if they want to participate in the decision. In a criminal case, #2 is arrived at through #1 where one party, the offender is given no choice, and the other party, the

state, is there by design of the structure of the criminal justice system. (Note that the other party is not the victim, a major concern of those who are encouraging restorative justice.)

A School System Example: Results From an Informal School Survey:

In the fall of 2000, Holland Elementary School invited me to train all teachers (one full day and six 2 hour follow-up sessions spread over six months) in *Discipline that Restores*.[11] It was really only an introduction but since they had had no prior exposure to this methodology it seemed like a good occasion for an informal survey. A major focus included how to utilize "The Four Response Options Model" and some skills and strategies to increase their capability to utilize #3 and #4. The goal was to utilize #3 and #4 more in responding to discipline situations and to rely less on #2 and #1 (except in safety or chaos situations).
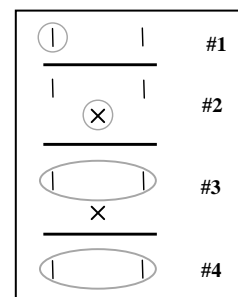
All teachers completed a questionnaire before the training and again 10 months later. Question:

I spend ____% of my time in discipline on a bad day. **Average Before 36.9% After 23.5%**

I spend ____% of my time in discipline on a good day. **Average Before 13.2% After 10.0%**

When a student is defiant:

    A. I react with immediate punishment

    B. I don't react, I try to understand their perspective, then decide what to do.

(26% shift from A to B indicates movement from starting at #1 to starting at #4.)

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[11] Ron Claassen, "School Conflict Management and Mediation" (A Manual, Fresno: Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies, 1998), p. 62.

Observation: Given these responses and assuming one in seven days is a bad day, on the average, if in the following year, these numbers continued, each teacher would gain approximately 9 days in the school year. Their self-reporting would indicate that they would spend substantially less time, 9 days, in discipline. This result is the opposite of what they expected when they first considered utilizing #3 and #4 more and #2 and #1 less. They thought that it would take more time if they started utilizing #3 and #4 more.
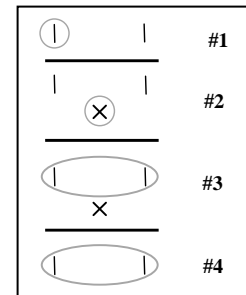
The amount of training time in my estimation was not enough and yet the results appear significant and seem to indicate that Roxanne's classroom experience could be duplicated. More research is needed in more settings.


A Criminal Justice Example: Juvenile Justice in New Zealand

In 1989 New Zealand passed legislation that combined their Child Welfare Systems with their Juvenile Justice System. They also required that before a case could go to court (#2) there must be an opportunity for the case to be resolved using a Family Group Conference (#3).

As the Family Group Conference has developed, it includes offender plus extended family and other significant support persons, victim and their choice of support persons, criminal justice system representation, and led by a youth justice coordinator. Support people from their faith communities were encouraged for both victim and offender.

The purpose of the Conference was to recognize the offense and figure out the best way of resolving the immediate needs created by the offense and also addressing the needs that led up to the offense.

The decision rule was consensus. There would be no agreement unless everyone, except the youth justice coordinator, agreed (#3). If the offender did not accept responsibility for doing the offense and wanted to have a chance to prove it in court (#2) then that is what would happen. If the group worked at the process together and couldn't come to an agreement, then the case would go on to the court (#2).
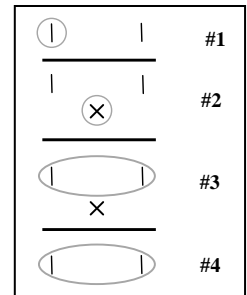
Results: By 1995, 90% of cases were being given the opportunity to go to a Family Group Conference. They experienced a 75% reduction in court cases. In addition, they experienced a reduction in use of youth detention facilities by 66%.[12]

Results: Between 1995 and 2001 the percentage of cases being referred on to the court has remained constant but the number of cases entering the system has been reduced by almost 50%.[13]

Observations: They modified their structure to encourage starting the response to a crime at #3 and using #2 as a back up. When they did this, the incentive for offenders changed from encouraging them to say not guilty (to try to get out of accepting responsibility and serving the punishment -#1) to accepting responsibility and doing what was necessary to make things as right as possible. Rather than removing kids from families or creating a division between the juvenile justice system and families, families were encouraged and assisted as needed to assume their role providing appropriate guidance (#1 and #2) and making agreements (#3 and #4) for a more just and peaceful future.

It is clear from their experience that using #4 and #3 as much as possible and using #2 and #1 as a back up and therefore much less often has been more effective, more efficient, and more peaceful.

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[12] Conference Presentation by Judge Fred McElrea and Youth Justice Coordinator Matt Hawkiaha, Restorative Justice Conference, Fresno, 1996

So Why Don't People Use #3 and #4 More?

I think there are four main reasons (I am sure there are many more) why we
don't use #4 and #3 more.

1. *The parties in the conflict or those who need to make a decision lack the
   skills and strategies to be successful in utilizing #4 or #3.*
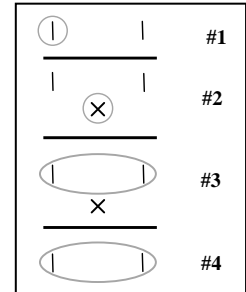
Everyone probably has some of the skills and some strategies to do #4 or #3 but if as a child
we rarely saw it modeled by our parents or our teachers, then we didn't learn many skills or
strategies to successfully utilize them. The skills utilized in #4 or #3 are different from those used
in #2 or #1. To discuss this thoroughly would require a another article. For our purpose here let
me just note that what I often see is a brief attempt at #4 and #3 but the process is quickly given up
when there is some resistance. The movement is usually to a #1 resulting in withdrawing, giving
in, or demanding "my way." In order to stay in a #4 or #3 longer, especially when there is
substantial resistance, requires more than interest or desire, it requires specific strategies and skills.
Of course, skills and strategies alone are not enough if some of the parties are not willing to work
constructively. And, even if people want to work constructively, if they don't have the strategies
and skills to do it, they are not likely to be successful.

When parties in conflict don't have a way to consciously choose an option, it is more likely
they will utilize #1 or #2. Sometimes one party wants to work it out together and the other also
wants to work it out together but in a different way or thinks an outside presence would be helpful.

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[13] Conference Presentation by Youth Justice Coordinator Allen McRae, Restorative Justice Conference, Fresno, 2001

If they have no mechanism for discussing it, the one with the greater power often gets frustrated and takes a unilateral action and sets in motion a #1 or #2. However these same parties could have utilized the model to help them look at the options and choose which one they would like to use. Using the model is a strategy that increases the likelihood that the parties will choose to use #3 or #4.

Since violence happens at #1 and #2, violence could be reduced by consciously using the model at home, at schools, in the workplace, in the community, etc.
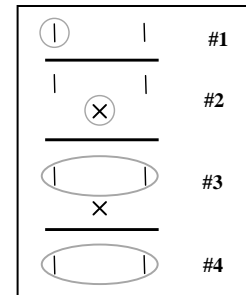
2. *Nobody invites the parties to consider #4 or #3.*

A #4 or #3 never happens unless someone suggests the option and invites the parties to consider it. As in the example of Roxanne and her students, she lets them know that she will be inviting them and she also says she would be open to their invitation. It must be an invitation since by definition #4 and #3 are cooperative processes. Some suggest that when Roxanne invites her students, she is really giving them no choice since she has the greater power. And, as we said before, in the end, if in a safe setting any of the parties say they really did not agree with the decision or resolution, then we didn't really do a #4 or #3. It also happens that people enter the process feeling somewhat coerced at first but then in the end, in a safe setting say they really agreed with the decision or resolution. When this happens, even though it looked at first like a #1 or #2, it really was a #4 or #3. In either case, it required someone to suggest the possibility and then offer an invitation.

3. *Some structures prevent or discourage use of a #4 or #3.*

There are some structures like workplace management or grievance policies, school or classroom discipline programs, and criminal justice systems that call for #2 or #1 immediately upon observation or reporting of a crime, dispute, misbehavior or conflict. Because of the structure, an action must be taken at #1 or a referral made to a #2 process. The people in this structure have no choice or option or at least no encouragement to try a #4 or #3.
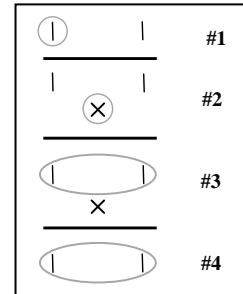
We could design our structures to encourage the use of #4 and #3 and save #2 and #1 for backup. There would still be some safety situations that require #1 (with the authority acting in ways that are respectful, reasonable, restorative, and with the intention of reintegration) to restore order or safety.   When that is accomplished, #3 or #4 would again be the preferred option to deal with the situation that caused #1 to be utilized.   There are many situations that utilize #1 or #2 that could be responded to at #4 or #3 and aren't just because there is no structure designed to encourage it or require that it be considered.

The New Zealand illustration is a good example of the movement from a structure that discouraged or prevented use of #3 to a structure that encouraged and even required a serious attempt to do a #3 before using #2.

4. *Many think that if a rule or law has been violated, then there is a need to punish the offender.*

For many people, this need for punishment is simply not questioned. It is just the way things are done. Everyone knows that something needs to be done and since punishment is the

response we are most familiar with, punishment is what happens most often.

Punishment is administered at #1 and #2. When punishment is administered,

the one who committed the crime or misbehavior is simply told what to do. In

the "Four Response Options Model" the receiver of the punishment is not

included in the circle. Sometimes it hurts the offender a lot and sometimes the
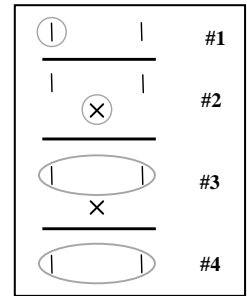
offender may decide not to do it again. But, the problem with punishment is that the offender does

not necessarily accept any responsibility for the offensive act, they do nothing to repair the damage,

and they make no agreements to not do the same thing again in the future. So, while we often

associate the words, accountability and punishment, punishment does not really meet the criteria of

holding the offending person accountable. Rather, punishment is simply authorities saying to the

offender, "since you hurt someone, we, the authorities, will hurt you." There is another way to

view this situation. "Restorative Justice Principles and Continuums"[14] and "Discipline that

Restores Principles"[15] offer another view. They say that we need rules and those rules, when

broken, alert the authorities that there is a human violation that needs to be dealt with. There are

three things that need to be done for restorative justice: a) the injustice or violation needs to be

recognized with all relevant primary and secondary parties, b) things need to be done to make

things as right as possible, and c) there needs to be agreements and follow-up to prevent it from

happening again.[16] I think it is far preferable if these three things are accomplished at #3 or #4 but

if the offender is unwilling to be cooperative, then they should be accomplished as much as

possible at #2 or #1 depending on the situation. Whichever option is utilized and whatever is done

it must meet the criteria of being respectful, reasonable, restorative, and reintegrative. Because we

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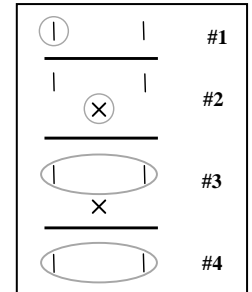[14] Claassen, "School Conflict" p. 62.
[15] Ibid. pp. 51-53.
[16] Ibid. p. 116

are familiar with using punishment to respond to a misbehavior or crime, we often don't even consider utilizing #3 or #4.[17]

A Biblical Perspective

The "Four Options Model" is simply a representation of the ways people respond to conflict, misbehavior, and decision-making. In this section I want to look at Biblical texts for valuing and prioritizing the options. In an earlier section we noted that Ury, Brett and Goldberg, of the Harvard Negotiation Project and based on research in coal mines, found that when systems use #3 and #4 more and #1 and #2 less, their systems are less stressful and more efficient.

I am starting here with the assumption that God, as we have been told in the Bible, has a vision that all people should live in shalom relationships. What I want to do in this section is to look at some biblical texts to see how the processes recommended in the Bible, or used by exemplary people in the Bible, utilize the options and how they compare to the observations of Ury, Brett, and Goldberg.

While it is clear that I could find examples in the Bible that utilize all of the options, I will be focusing on Jesus' teachings in Mark 10 regarding the use of power over (#1), a few other text that demonstrate the value of #3 and #4, and finally Matthew 18 which describes a step by step process (similar to the Model) for dealing with a conflict in the church.

Mark 10 includes a series of issues Jesus responded to. Verse 35ff is a story about James and John asking for the special privilege of sitting at the right and left of Jesus, apparently positions that would give them power over others, or in the language of the Model, the ability to be in the circle in #1. Jesus responded by letting them know that it is not something he simply grants as a favor. The other ten disciples upon hearing this became angry with James and John, probably

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[17] Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice,* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1990), p. 89.

another argument about power. Then Jesus responded with a story that illustrates they still have not

understood his teaching about power over (#1) and power with (#4).

> [42]So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. [43]But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, [44]and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. [45]For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The book of Philemon is a letter written to deal with a specific conflict and in

the process addresses the use of power. Paul is sending Onesimus back to a group that

he knows is not excited about having him back. What I want to focus on is that Paul

says he has the authority to act as the one in the circle in a #1 but he prefers to do be in

the #4 circle with them.
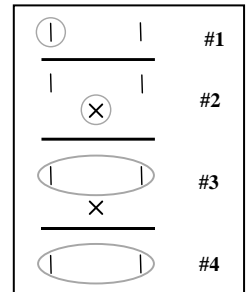
> 8 For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, [9]yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. [10]I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus…
>
> [14]… I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

Paul provides rationale for using a #3 or #4 rather than a #1 or #2 and that is to clarify that

they are doing their good deed as a voluntary act. Paul knows that the outcome will not be as

constructive if he forces his way using a #1. He also chooses to make it clear that although he has

the authority to force his way and could exercise that option as a backup, it is not his preferred

option.

Acts 15 starts with a conflict, describes a resolution to that conflict, and ends with another

conflict.

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' [2]And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

It is important to note that Paul and Barnabas were sent to the apostles and elders to discuss the issues (#3 or #4) and not to force their position (#1) or ask the elders for a judgment (#2).
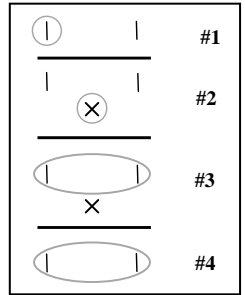
Whenever a #3 or #4 is attempted, it is not until at the end, after the process is completed that you know for sure if everyone agreed. In this case it was clear that some of the people, Peter, Paul and Barnabas, James and Simeon, had significant authority but in the end it appears that the gathered group arrived at a consensus #3 or #4.

6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. [7]After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them…

[12]The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. [13]After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. [14]Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles…

[28]For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials…

When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. [31]When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation.

The evidence that they arrived at a consensus (#3 or #4) is in verse 28 where it says "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…" What is interesting about this consensus is that they don't just say that they arrived at a consensus but that they included the Holy Spirit inside the circle. This story gives direction to those of us who claim to be people of God. When we try to utilize #3 or #4 we need to be sure that we include the Holy Spirit inside the circle. This doesn't

mean that one of us claims to have God on our side but that when we discuss and listen, even

through much dissention and debate, we are aiming to arrive at a place where we can say as they

did at this Jerusalem conflict resolution conference, "is has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to

us…"

The last part of Acts 15 reminds us that conflict is a normal and ongoing part

of living in a community together. It would be a false hope to think that once we

resolve a conflict we won't have any further conflict. It may not be with the same

people but we can be sure there will be more conflict. Paul and Barnabas were on the

same side in the conflict regarding circumcision of the Gentiles but after that was

resolved they soon had conflict between them as described in the last part of Acts 15.
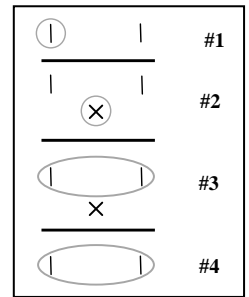
> 36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' [37]Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. [38]But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. [39]The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. [40]But Paul chose Silas and set out….

The conflict between them appears at first glance to be handled at a #1, with Paul doing the

deciding and Barnabas not having any choice in the matter. But it is not clear if they decided to

part by a mutual agreement, #4, or if one of them had no choice (#1). It is impossible to tell from

the text and the only way to know for sure would have been to ask each one if the final decision

was one they both agreed on.

Phillipians 4 seems to be a good example of Paul suggesting a #4 or if needed, a #3.

> [2]I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. [3]Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel,

together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names
are in the book of life.

To be "of the same mind in the Lord" is asking them to seek a #3 or #4 with the two of them and the Holy Spirit inside the circle. The RSV reads, "and I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women…" This reading makes it even clearer that Paul is suggesting a #3 if they aren't able to complete a #4 on their own.

Matthew 18 is an important passage to examine since many churches utilize this passage as a guide for church discipline. The "Four Options Model" has similarities to the four step process recommended in Matthew 18 for people responding to being "sinned against." I will be looking how the steps of Matthew 18 compare to the Model and also for which options are preferred. In addition, this passage is really helpful in emphasizing the overall purpose of using any of the options and clarifying that it makes a huge difference "how" the options are utilized.

The process steps that are referred to and applied as church discipline from Matthew 18 are outlined in a relatively brief passage in the middle of the chapter, verses 15 - 17. However, I think it is very important to read these verses in the context of both the larger Biblical vision of Peace/Shalom and in the context of the whole chapter.

The larger vision of Shalom reminds us that God's preference is for people to live in right relationship with each other and with God. A person "sins" when doing something that damages a relationship. In verse 15 when it refers to a situation where a member of the church sins against you, it is referring to when a member of the church has acted in a way that is anti-shalom. Given the larger biblical vision of shalom, it is important to read the specific strategy in verses 15-17 as a process intended for the purpose of restoring Shalom.
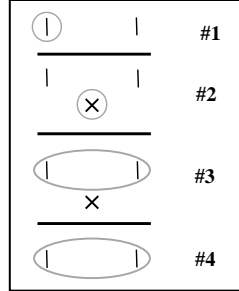
When I read chapter 18 with these ideas in mind what I see is the first part of the chapter, those verses before verse 15 focused on helping the one who has been "sinned against" to prepare for a constructive confrontation. The verses following verses 15-17 are primarily focused on

forgiveness. I will focus on the verses 15 – 17 and compare the process steps to the Four Options Model. But since the preparation to confront is so important I will include a few comments on the three paragraphs before verses15-17. I will not comment on forgiveness since it has been already discussed in the paper on the Peacemaking Model.
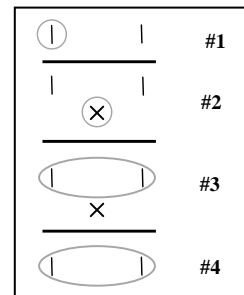
The first paragraph starts with a question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

> "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' [2]He called a child, whom he put among them, [3]and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [4]Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. [5]Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. [6]'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea."

When I read this passage through the lens of preparing for confrontation in a constructive way, it is saying that the confronter is not ready to confront the other if even part of the motivation for the confrontation is for the purpose of trying to show who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Asking the question "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" is the wrong question because it will only cause more division and not lead to re-establishing shalom.

The second paragraph focuses whether the planned confrontation will have a destructive impact on the one being confronted.

> 7 Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes! [8]'If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. [9]And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire. [10]'Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.

This is a stern warning to the one planning to confront. It is essential for the one planning to confront another to seriously consider whether this planned confrontation might become a "stumbling block" to the other.
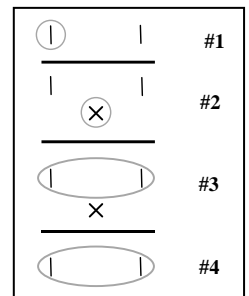
For example, as a mediator with families and churches, I have observed some actions that become a "stumbling block." One person, usually the one initiating the confrontation, can make a gesture, make a comment, or roll their eyes in a certain way and the other loses self control, becomes angry, and says things that are very destructive. The warning is to the one who knows they have the ability to "set the other off." Before confronting another one has to conduct a self examination and make a commitment not do those things that will interfere with the re-establishment of shalom.

The final paragraph before the outlined process steps in verses 15 - 17 makes it clear that re-establishing shalom is the only legitimate reason for utilizing the confrontation process.

> [12]What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? [13]And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-

nine that never went astray. [14]So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

In the context of conflict it seems to me that this would mean that the one who is confronting the other member should only do so if they are ready to do it in a spirit of being constructive, for the purpose of restoring the relationship, not knowing in advance where or how the restoration will happen, and ready to rejoice when right relationships are restored.

Most of the chapter after the stepped outline process is focused on forgiveness. But between the process outline and the comments on forgiveness is a small section to highlight two items: 1) the importance of the re-establishing right relationships and 2) the assurance that if the confrontation is approached for the right purpose, the Spirit of Christ, the reconciling Spirit, will be present.
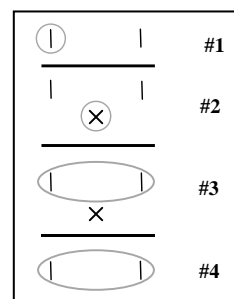
[18]Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. [19]Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. [20]For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

The balance of the chapter is focused on forgiveness. It starts with an encouragement to not give up. Sometimes a person is tempted to not enter the forgiveness process or in other words, they are resistant to confront and try to re-establish right relationships, often because they have tried before and it seemed not to be successful. But the encouragement is to never give up.

21 Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' [22]Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

I am not going to discuss the forgiveness process in detail here. In another article, "A Peacemaking Model" I suggest that forgiveness is discovered when people come together with a

commitment to be constructive, recognize the injustices (listen), and restore equity and clarify future commitments to prevent the injustice from happening again. I think the stories that complete this chapter illustrate this assertion in rather dramatic fashion and again emphasize how important it is to re-establish shalom relationships.

To summarize the context for verses 15 – 17 I would say that if re-establishing shalom is the reason for the confrontation, then and only then, is the confronter ready to proceed. The process of confrontation is not for the purpose of putting someone out but for maintaining or restoring of the wholeness that is central for shalom.
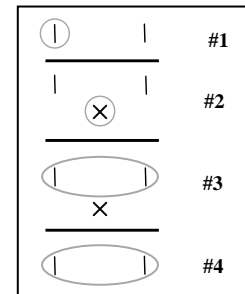
When the preparation is complete, the steps in verses 15-17 provide a stepped process that might be referred to as a controlled escalation process. But even though it is an escalating process, it is important to remember that **all** steps in the process are for the purpose of re-establishing shalom (right relationship with others and with God).

> 15 'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point
> out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to
> you, you have regained that one. [16]But if you are not listened to, take
> one or two others along with you, so that every word may be
> confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17]If the member
> refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender
> refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a
> Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18: 15-17)

Having established how important it is to prepare for confrontation and how important it is to remember the purpose of confrontation, I am now ready to discuss verses 15-17 and compare them with the "Four Options Model." What I discovered, to my delight, was that the Four Options

Model is another way of illustrating this process. It didn't surprise me because I think that the

Model simply illustrates part of God's wonderful creation.

Step One:

> "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out
> the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you,
> you have regained that one." (vs. 15)

This is one way to do option #4. The advice for the one who has been

"sinned against" is to go to the other. Then the two alone, without any outside

help, start by the one who was "sinned against" describing the violation and the

other listening. This is very similar to the first step in the "Peacemaking

Model." We might even extend it to suggest that they talk about the problem
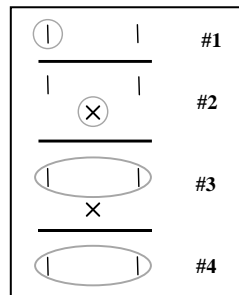
and listen to each other. While it doesn't actually say that they would then attempt to "restore

equity" and "clarify future intentions" as suggested in the "Peacemaking Model," my experience in

working with people in conflict is that if two people in conflict respectfully talk about a problem

and listen to each other's perspective, they are not far from being able to come to some agreement

about how to respond to the conflict. It is important to remember that this is what happens only if

both are willing to search for a constructive resolution or agreement.

The instruction to the one who has been "sinned against" is to not even approach the other

until having examined ones own motives for confronting the other and not confronting the other

until one is clear that the purpose of the confrontation is to restore the relationship. The other, the

one being confronted, will then need to decide about willingness to search for a way to restore the

relationship. The passage says the evidence of this will be willingness to listen. If the one being

confronted is willing to listen, the passage says, "You have regained that one." Given the context,
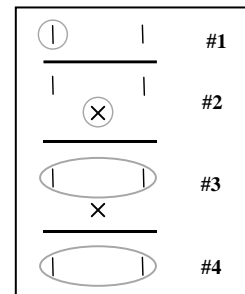
this seems to imply making peace between them and finding agreement. In the language of the "Peacemaking Model" it would mean that if they "recognize the injustice" together in the context of "agape," they will be able to come to some agreement about how to "restore equity" and "clarify future intentions."

The passage also suggests that there may be times when the one being confronted will not "listen."

Step Two:

> "But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses." (vs. 16)

"…Take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses." This seems similar to Option #3. The primary work is still between the two but they do this in the presence of two or three witnesses. It would appear that the purpose of the two or three additional people is to witness, to observe for the purpose of increasing the accountability of both parties. To be credible witnesses, they would have to be people who are seen in the eyes of both parties as people of integrity who are open to observing and reporting what they observe without bias. Given the context, they would be people who have as their motive for participating, a desire to help the parties in their search for restoration of their relationship.

It may be that in the presence of these witnesses, the one doing the confronting will do it in a way that makes it clearer and less accusatory or in some other way easier for the one being confronted to listen. Or it may be that in the presence of these witnesses the one being confronted is willing to listen even though not being willing to listen when they were just the two of them. Or

it may be that while the one being confronted could not "listen" to the one who was "sinned

against," he might be willing to listen to the witnesses. Sometimes it is easier to hear the others

perspective if it is told by one who is not so directly involved.

The role of the witnesses is to help the parties in the conflict listen to each other.

This process of having witnesses who have a role but are not the ones directly

involved in the conflict looks a lot like a #3. So it seems that if #4 is not successful,

this process suggests trying #3. But there are no guarantees of agreement even in with

these witnesses involved.
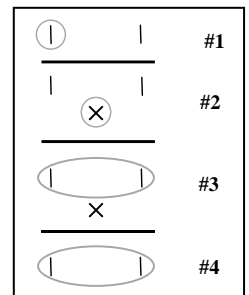
The passage also suggests that there may be times when the one being

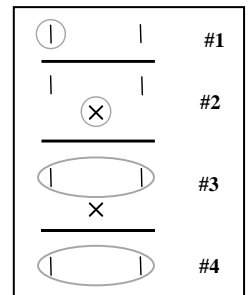confronted will still not "listen."

Step Three:

> "If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if
> the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to
> you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (vs. 17)

"Tell it to the church" seems to be suggesting two possible roles for the church to be done in

sequence. The first is for the church to continue to act as witnesses, as the outside parties in #3. In

that case the church as a whole, or perhaps simply a larger group than two or three, help so that the

"listening" can happen. And if the listening is still not happening it appears that there comes a time

when the role of the church changes. The role changes but the goal is still the same, to help restore

shalom relationships. The second role for the church, larger group is told to render an opinion or

judgment as the outside authority in #2. The judgment that the church is to make is whether the

one who has been confronted is simply unwilling to listen. They do not make a judgment about

whether one is right or wrong or if one has violated a particular law or rule. The decision they are asked to make as a church is if the accused "offender refuses to listen." The hope is that in hearing the judgment of the church, a group that includes a significant number of people who are known and respected by both parties, the attitude and openness of the one being confronted will change. If it doesn't they are instructed to move on to step four.

Step Four:

"Let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." It is interesting that the language is to "let such a one be to you…" It appears that after all of the preparation and other Steps it is now clear that the "offender" has separated themselves from the church and the group simply acknowledges and names what has been done. It sounds like a #1. But a #1 can be done in ways that are respectful, reasonable, and intended to restore or it can be done in ways that are disrespectful, unreasonable, and intended to create distance. The question then is how the "offender" should be treated in the process and after this is completed. Jesus' instructions were to "let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." The big question then is if we are to treat the "offender" as Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors or as the religious leaders of the day treated Gentiles and tax collectors. Jesus treated them as people of dignity who he valued and ate with and cared enough to encourage them to consider how God would want them to be. The religious leaders of the Jews at that time kept their distance and treated them poorly. Given that this is Jesus giving the instructions I think the instruction is to acknowledge the situation as it is and to treat the "offender" in the naming process and after in ways that continue to show caring and caring in ways that are respectful, reasonable, and intended to restore shalom relationships.

The balance of the chapter, as stated earlier, is to clarify the importance of using the steps, "…whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven..," the goal of the process, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?" and the need to be patient and persistent, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

When Matthew 18 is applied in the reconciling spirit of Christ, it is not something to be feared or avoided but is simply an integral part of caring for the members of the church.

Matthew 18 confirms the four basic options as presented in the Model. The Model is simply a pictorial way of representing the steps of the process. Its value is if it helps people talk about the options and clarify a process that will lead toward the restoration of shalom relationships.
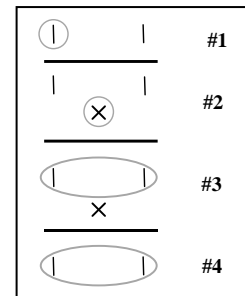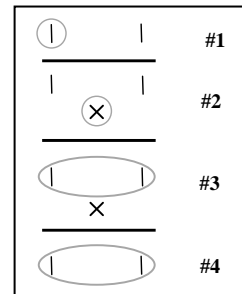
Some pastors have used the Model to help their congregation understand Matthew 18. A few pastors have told me they have used the Model to clarify how they decisions are made at council and congregational meetings. Some pastors have used the model in pre-marital counseling sessions to help couples discuss how they plan to make decisions and deal with their conflicts. Some have described how they utilize the model to help them discuss options with both staff and members. Those who have utilized it describe it as a very useful tool.

What this Biblical Perspective section has attempted to illustrate is that the Biblical text utilizes these responses as the four basic options available when conflict or misbehavior erupts. In addition I have tried to illustrate that there is significant Biblical text that supports utilizing #3 and #4 as primary responses in conflict and misbehavior situations and reserving #1 or #2 as backup responses.

Conclusion

The Model suggests that we will utilize one of four distinct options when responding to a conflict or making a decision.   It also suggests that in any conflict situation there are four possible response options and we could consciously choose which one we will use.   When noting the continuums within each option, the Model also suggests that there are many variations within each option.

When parties in conflict don't consciously choose an option, it is more likely they will utilize #1 or #2. Sometimes one party wants to work it out together and the other also wants to work it out together but in a different way or thinks an outside presence would be helpful. If they have no mechanism for discussing it, the one with the greater power often gets frustrated and takes a unilateral action and sets in motion a #1 or #2. However these same parties could have utilized the Model to help them look at the options and choose which one they would like to use. Using the Model increases the likelihood that the parties will choose to use #3 or #4. Since violence happens at #1 and #2, violence could be reduced by consciously using the model at home, at schools, in the workplace, in the community, etc. and increasing our use of #3 and #4.

I think that while #3 and #4 are preferable in most situations, there will be times when one will not be willing to cooperate. When this happens it makes #3 and #4 impossible and so there will be a need for #2 and #1 as back up options. This was illustrated in the steps in Matthew 18.

I have two concerns: 1) Parties in conflict should always be given the opportunity and encouragement to use #3 or #4. 2) If parties choose not to use #3 or #4 my concern is how the ones in the circle in #1 and #2 use their ability to control and make decisions for others. When control over others is used in ways that are respectful, reasonable, and restorative it is experienced as constructive and when they are disrespectful, unreasonable, and intended to stigmatize and

ostracize it is experienced as destructive. If we each invite, encourage, and assist #3 and #4 as much as possible there will still be times when each of us is in the circle in #1 and #2. We can each help make our world a little better place by monitoring ourselves and asking others to hold us accountable at those times when we are inside the circle in #1 and #2.

I have a clear preference for #4 and #3, especially on important decisions. As noted, to do #4 or #3 requires that parties are willing to cooperate. I think that more parties will be willing to cooperate when they are introduced to this Model and asked which option they prefer. I think that parties will work longer and harder at staying with #3 or #4 when they are clear about the other options, clear about possible movement within each option, and clear about their alternatives to #3 or #4.
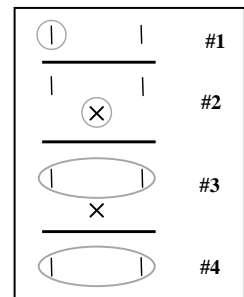
I think that making the role of power explicit will influence those with the ability to be in the circle in #1 to see the positive value in #3 and #4, reduce their fear of losing power, and encourage them to use #1 and #2 less and #3 and #4 more. Making power explicit can help remind us of Jesus instruction in Mark 10 to focus on "serving" rather than to "lord it over them."

I think that making the role of power explicit also raises the issue of valuing each other. It is when we value all people equally, that we are especially motivated to utilize #3 and #4 as our first preference.

For those of us who call ourselves the people of God, when we respond to a conflict or misbehavior utilizing #3 or #4, we will want to have the Spirit of God represented as one of the parties in the circle so we can say as those in Acts 15, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

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