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COMPROMISE vs. CONSENSUS

Some people think that **Compromise** and **Consensus** are one in the same. There are very important differences between the two, especially when it comes to individual self-care and to Co-Parenting.

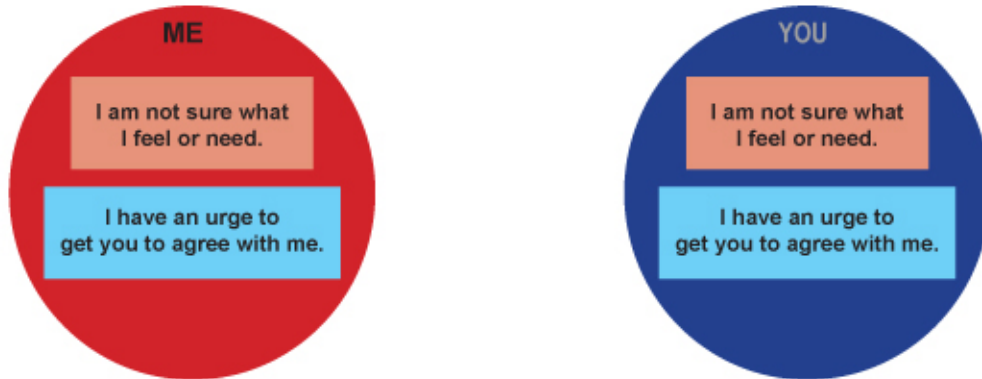
COMPROMISE

COMPROMISE (Wikipedia)

koh-pruh-mahyz

To compromise is to make a deal between different parties where each party gives up part of their demand. In arguments, compromise is a concept of finding agreement through communication, through a mutual acceptance of terms—often involving variations from an original goal or desire.

In modern family situations the idea of **Compromise** is usually based upon competing demands and some willingness for each party to give up some part of their demands. However, in modern life, people tend to be so focused outside themselves making demands small complicated manipulations that neither party really remembers what was felt or what actually had been needed. But modern people think they know what they want. When asked, they are not so clear headed about their goals. They usually behave as if they want the other person to make some sacrifice that will indicate a loss of face. Each party **says** they are willing to give up on getting a portion of their demands to get the other to make an agreement. If there is agreement they feel like they lost or won but neither party trusts the other to follow through. Each party has complicated impulses around loyalty to the process. The compromise soon collapses and is often forgotten. This leaves both parties with an increasing sense of powerlessness, bitterness, anxiety, and distrust. As both family leaders co-escalate toward another round. The needs of each family member continues to remain unmet.



For the purposes of Parenting and Family Leadership COMPROMISE doesn't work at all. The structure of Compromise is manipulative and co-dependent:

1. I give away something for the moment.
2. To get something I need from you.
3. Later I will seek to modify the agreement or I will behave as if there is no agreement.

Both parties in the "agreement" know that manipulation is happening so both tend to ratchet up the anxiety and the process often becomes aggressive and cyclic. No end in sight. No developmental needs are met for any family member.

Both parties in any power struggle are **manipulative** and **controlling**, the two pillars of co-dependence. We feel increasingly anxious, increasingly impulsive, and increasingly powerless. If we knew there was a better way perhaps we would try it out. Let us put this to a test. OK?

CONSENSUS

CONSENSUS (Wikipedia)

con-sen-sus

Consensus decision-making is a group decision making process that seeks the consent, not necessarily the agreement of participants and the resolution of objections. Consensus is defined by Merriam-Webster as, first, general agreement, and second, group solidarity of belief or sentiment. It has its origin in the Latin word *cōnsēnsus* (agreement), which is from

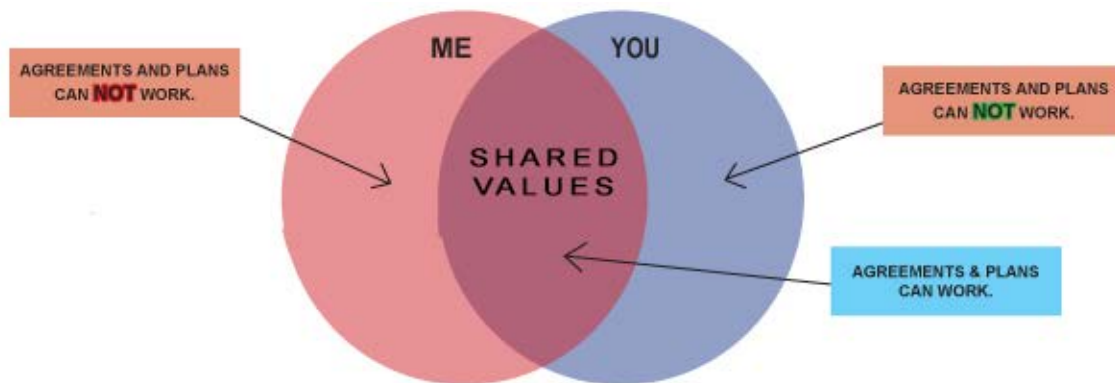
cōnsentiō meaning literally **feel together**. It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of reaching a consensus decision, and the social and political effects of using this process.

The idea of Consensus is based upon the reality of overlapping interests. People who have chosen to live together for some time almost certainly have a long list of values in common, especially if they are parenting children. Things may have become very difficult but there are strengths in the relationship derived arising from the strengths of each individual. These strengths usually represent a good portion of their Shared Values.

In Consensus we realize we can choose to gain some hope when we agree to stop trying to get agreement in areas where we will be unlikely to agree. Where "SHARED VALUES" do not overlap, (See below.) we can choose to stop spending time on thorny dilemmas that both agree are non-starters.

On the other hand, where do "SHARED VALUES" overlap?(See Below.) Where are we already in agreement? What has kept us together so far? What brought us together in the beginning? What do you and I feel, and what do you and I need that are shared feelings and needs. Any ideas that are based upon these shared feelings and needs will find their way into any approaches included in plans that feel functional for both of us. Among humans there is usually a good amount of shared feeling and need about important components of life. (Our children's well being, etc.) Any plan that works for all members (by their own reporting) is built from the co-parents shared feelings and needs. #

Both Positive Generalizations and Negative Generalizations are not helpful. We can choose to reflect* and perhaps hesitate to sabotage difficult (perhaps impossible work) that we both know is essential work to meet the needs of our family.



For the purposes of Family Healing, **SELFTIMEOUT SERVICES** further defines Consensus as follows:

- **A high priority is placed upon noticing (through "active listening")# what feelings and needs we share in common.** We can start each attempt at agreement by collecting and documenting those common feelings and needs.
- **Both Positive Generalizations and Negative Generalizations are not helpful.** We can choose to hesitate to sabotage difficult (perhaps impossible work) that we both know is essential work to meet the needs of our family. We can choose to be simple and use our own feeling and needs to express the ideas we share in this process.
- **Once committed to the process each of us can choose to spend much of our time in individual reflection# to open ourselves to insights.** Insights usually emerge as insignificant seeming thoughts. Those are the best insights. It is a good idea to stay calm and not too heavily attached to emerging thoughts before they have been shared with the other party. Both parties can keep notes of every thought submitted by either of you.. You will have built two documents that are close to the same list of ideas. Whoever needs to reject an idea contributed by the other can take responsibility for adding a new idea/insight of their own. This cycles back and forth with rejected insights documented here and accepted insights documented there. So each person will have a list of mutually accepted ideas and mutually rejected ideas. #

- **Not agreeing until we actually do agree. Only saying, “I agree” when I honestly do agree on a course of action that will require my best effort over weeks, months or perhaps always.** This new course of action is usually so difficult we are unsure we can sustain the effort. “We have never succeeded at this before.” These are delicate and very human situations because both of us share a feeling that success is necessary but perhaps improbable. We are not sure we can do this work but success is necessary, so each of us can choose not to declare failure and blame. Instead we can keep getting back to being gentle and respectful with ourselves which will make it possible for us to be gentle and respectful with our co-parent. It is very hard. Stop. Take a break. Come back later after reflection* having been gentle and respectful with yourself and ready to be gentle and respectful with your co-parent. Respectful = Self-Honest. I can choose to stop agreeing to go to the next step until I actually, inside myself, agree we are in agreement with the current step. **Going ahead without honest agreement kills the functionality of any plan.**
- **Then, perhaps after some rest and reflection* both parties share their reflections on the the list of accepted insights.** In their discussions they begin to put the accepted insights together into paragraph form. Agreeing on each step along the way. If they then, after considering the product as a whole, agree that what they have compiled might work as a Plan, they agree on a name for it, like “Plan #1”
- **When Plan #1 is tried for some agreed upon period and both agree that it was a partial success, both parties may decide that that is good enough for now and continue the use of that Plan #1.** If one of the parties needs to make changes to improve functionality then the consensus process gets back to work inputting new insight ideas.
- **Each person exercises their freedom and authority to make judgments and decisions within the consensus framework for seeking a new plan to move forward.**
- Each person has equal input into the process. Each person can table, amend and veto or block proposals.
- **Each person is free to say, “NO.” Going ahead without honest agreement kills the functionality of any plan.**

Consensus emphasizes the need for common agreement in situations where independent activity or compromise has led to failure and ongoing dysfunction. We keep trying because the stakes are so high and some kind of teamwork is needed even though success feels unlikely. We both need to be at our best even if we are not sure we can succeed.

Each person can choose to be aware of the great loss associated with dishonesty or manipulative or hidden “zero sum” motives. Failure is when the process is stopped without achieving a functioning agreement and progress toward family development is forsaken. Failure can also come from, (Finishing a plan that, in the end, does not function.) when we have not shared feelings, needs and insights due to insufficient Reflection*, self-respect and self-honesty to match the gravity of the human need in the family.

Each person can choose to be aware that when there is even small progress, that progress came because both parties were incredibly uncomfortable, both parties took huge risks and any gain must be celebrated equally by both parties.

There must be celebration. When something even a little good results from effort toward unlikely progress in an atmosphere of risk and hopelessness, each person can choose to own their part in this success, and appreciating their counterpart do a happy dance of some sort in public!

When we choose not to celebrate small success, how will this small thing know that we both want it to grow and prosper?

ACTIVE LISTENING#

PLEASE READ: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_listening

REFLECTION*

PLEASE READ: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/5533/reflection-2014.pdf>