Wisdom Projects

Peace, Healing, and Justice For All



Understanding Consequences

Healing behavior necessitates understanding consequences—the causes and effects of actions.

Natural Consequences: These are the direct results of our actions.
Imposed Consequences: These are healthy interventions that make amends in the wake of offense after discussion or mediation with people involved in a conflict. Imposed consequences become unhealthy when they involve punishment.
Logical Consequences: Expectations predetermined by a group and explained to group members thereby making the un-fulfillment of the expectations a choice by a person.
Intent: What we mean to do.
Impact: The effect of our actions regardless of intent. Even though our intentions may be important to know when understanding our behavior, ultimately, we are judged on impact, not intent.
Consequences during mediation: During the investigative, fact-finding stage of mediations, we list and differentiate between these consequences while pinpointing the impact of actions.
Basic procedure for mediations: 1. **Fact-finding investigation:** Interview the individuals or groups involved in the conflict to ascertain what happened and how it happened from their points of view. 2. **Emotional re-setting and de-escalation**: Encourage participants to reset their emotions and move from protective to connective emotions. Emphasize honesty. Pinpoint commonalities that emerge from the interviews as well as differences. Talk through the need for diffusing tensions, anxiety, and stress. Be sure to continually emphasize the need for radical empathy: treating other as you wish to be treated AND treating others as *they* wish to be treated. 3. **Face-to-face discussions:** The individuals or groups meet together to discuss what happened, providing their own "take" on the conflict. Everyone pledges confidentiality. Participants are encouraged to be honest within an environment that does not include punishment. 4. **Agreed/Disagreed:** What can the individuals or groups agree on? What do the individuals disagree about? This part of the mediation maps agreements and disagreements in order to answer two pivotal questions: What offenses or harm occurred? Who committed the offense or harm? 5. **Accountability and consequences**: Based on the discovered facts, the conversation moves to the consequences that have arisen from the actions. Pinpointing the natural and logical consequences help to identify whether imposed consequences are needed. 6. **Agreement, amends, repair, restitution, healing:** A contract or agreement (preferably written) must be discussed and, ultimately, pledged or signed in which participants promise to make amends in specific ways and to uphold specific terms of accountability without backsliding or recidivism (meaning, without continuing the conflict, mistake, or offense).

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Accepting **consequences** is one of the first steps to embracing **accountability**.

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Natural consequences are the typical, direct results of our actions.

Logical consequences are expectations that attempt to prevent harm. We predetermine and explain to individuals and groups what will happen to them when they offend, err, harm, or misbehave. Expectations deliberately set a high degree of accountability for willful or repeated offenses and misbehavior. Impact matters more than intentions. Excuses and explanations must never replace accountability. Once we are apprised of what will happen if we err, it is logically our fault when we err and we must fully accept the predetermined consequences and both be held accountable and accept accountability.

Imposed consequences are humane yet strict measures that do the following:

- require accountability;
- warrant making amends;
- insist upon reparations;
- ensure safety;
- mandate treatment;
- confine, exile or restrict movement to protect others and oneself;
- deny rewards; and
- demand restoration.

Imposed consequences are intentionally challenging. They are not meant to "feel good."

Ideally, logical consequences become imposed consequences when someone offends.

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