

Stewart Levine

"A marvelous book."

—Stephen R. Covey,
author of *The 7 Habits of
Highly Effective People*

Foreword by Joel Barker,
author of *Paradigms:
The Business of
Discovering the Future*

Get- ting to reso- lu- tion

**Turning conflict
into collaboration**

Second Edition, Revised & Expanded

An Excerpt From

***Getting to Resolution:
Turning Conflict into Collaboration
Second Edition, Revised & Expanded***

by Steward Levine
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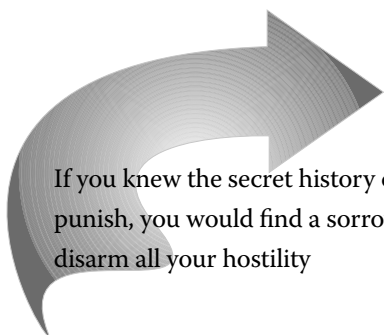
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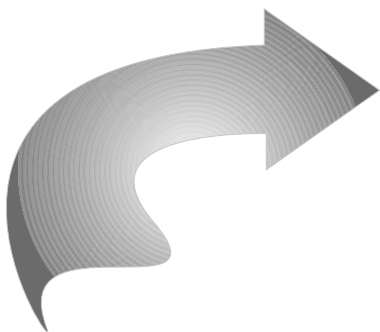


If you knew the secret history of those you would like to
punish, you would find a sorrow and suffering enough to
disarm all your hostility

H. W. Longfellow

We write because we have to say what we believe
We discover what we believe because we write
All else of writing is but a searching for form,
a style, a technique, to show those beliefs
in an acceptable artistic manner.
When we succeed our hearts are on the stage
to touch the hearts and minds of the audiences.
It is an awesome experience.

Unknown



Foreword

It isn't often one is asked to write a foreword to the second edition of a very popular book. Initially I didn't understand why Stewart would ask me, since I don't do conflict resolution or mediation of any sort. But I saw, in the subtitle, a word I like a lot: *collaboration*. So I sat down and read the book and then I understood my role.

You see, this book is about three things I value very highly. First, it is about a paradigm shift in resolving conflict. What Stewart is offering is a fundamentally new way to take a situation full of conflict, with the potential of "going to court," and turning it around so that both sides win.

Think about that for a minute: a system of rules and regulations that you can apply to almost any conflict—organizational, professional, personal—and end up with no conflict. In fact, end up with the two parties working together to make the world better for both.

Stewart takes you out of the courtroom, away from the lawyers, and gives you directions on how to find common ground and an agreement "in principle" which then guides you to building a roadmap to your mutual solution.

When you read his examples, you get this funny feeling: "I could have done that..." and then you think of a big conflict in your life where one of you, and usually both, end up dramatically dissatisfied.

I went through a major lawsuit in the 1990s, and I can tell you with certainty that if we had used Stewart's paradigm for conflict resolution it would have turned out very differently.

So, for just this one reason, Stewart's book is invaluable!

There is a second reason, and it has to do with the very important topic of innovation in the twenty-first century. My research into innovation tells me that much of it is going to be driven by differences, the combination of differences.

I call these kinds of innovations "innovations at the verge." A verge is the place where one thing and something very different meet. The verge provides a huge opportunity to combine ideas from vastly different industries and fields and cultures into powerful new innovations.

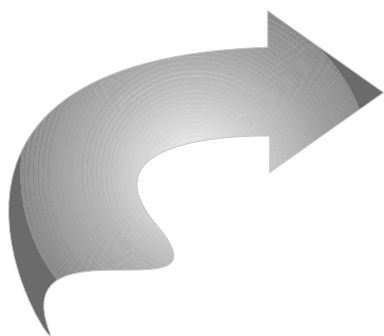
But—and this is a very big but—you will absolutely have to know how to collaborate at the highest order to be successful in this kind of innovation. Can you imagine taking an idea from a pharmaceutical company and adapting it with an idea from a concrete manufacturing company to create a verge innovation? Well, it will be combinations like that, and even stranger, that are going to drive the twenty-first century.

Stewart's book is the blueprint for how to act to achieve that kind of collaboration! If you want to be innovative at the verge, you have to know how to deal with differences. Stewart shows you how to do that.

The third reason I delight in Stewart's book is simple: it is a new vision for the world. I think visionary ideas are crucial to successful futures. Stewart is providing a vision, and a paradigm to support the vision, for how we can all get along a lot better.

Since I finished reading Stewart's book, I find myself building partnerships in a new way. I'm sure you'll find the same.

Joel Barker
Futurist, author, filmmaker



Preface

During my second year of law school I had my first “real” lawyer’s job. I was an intern at a local legal services clinic. On my first day I was handed twenty-five cases “to work on.” This would be my job for the semester. Three weeks later I asked the managing attorney for more cases. When he asked about the twenty-five he had given me, I told him that I had resolved them.

He was very surprised—and very curious. He asked how I had done it. I told him that I had reviewed the files, spoken to the clients, thought about a fair outcome and what needed to be done, called the attorney or agency on the other side, and reached a satisfactory resolution.

I knew nothing about being a lawyer. I had no inkling that the cases were difficult, needed to take a long time, or had to be handled in any particular way. With common sense and a “beginner’s mind,” I found the solution that worked best for all concerned. Simple? It was for me!

I spent the next twelve years becoming a “successful” lawyer—and becoming less effective at resolving matters. Then, feeling frustrated, anxious, and fearful, I stopped practicing law. I have been in “recovery” ever since, recovering what I knew about resolution when I started, discovering its component parts, and learning how to teach and model it for others.

As a young attorney, although I listened politely to more senior lawyers, I was surprised at the coaching I received.

Standard practice discouraged communication among the parties in conflict, communication that I had used in my legal services cases, communication essential for efficient resolution. Many lawyers were playing a very different game from the one my natural instincts chose.

Yet, I was fascinated with how the most effective judges and lawyers paid attention to people's real concerns. They knew what to honor and what to respect. They knew how to frame situations and condition people's expectations. They embodied a tradition that accommodated competing concerns and built consensus. Winning or losing was not the point of their work. Their game was resolution and getting people back to their lives.

I had a similar orientation, and this orientation, coupled with my belief that everyone had a lot to learn about conflict, focused me on trying to understand conflict, this pervasive aspect of life. Amid all the business and personal conflict, there was some clarity: We could do a lot better at managing conflict, and we could prevent conflict if we formed new business and personal relationships in a different way.

I am driven and motivated to use resources efficiently, to minimize the emotional fallout from conflict, and to build sustainable collaborations. This book shares what I have learned from observation, study, and reflection. That journey continues.

My Objectives

I have specific goals for this book:

1. Change your thinking about conflict. By providing a new set of principles and values, I would like you to shift from thinking about problems, fighting, and breakdowns to thinking about collaboration, engagement, learning, creativity, and the opportunity for creating value.

2. Provide a conversational model for agreement and resolution that enables you to develop the craft of helping people create sustainable collaborations. This model consists of specific, tangible steps for you to follow when conflict is present in any situation or when you start new professional or personal relationships.
3. Inspire you to develop a new perspective toward conflict. With this new perspective you could prevent the emotional trigger, the cost of unproductive energy, and the waste of resources. You would know that no matter how hopeless it seems, no matter how strong the emotional impulse to fight and win, resolution could be discovered within any situation.
4. Steward a mind-set of resolution. I want you to learn a model that fosters dignity and integrity; optimizes your resources; and allows all concerns to be voiced, honored, and woven into the resolution.
5. Foster a culture based on principles and practices of resolution and agreement. I hope the book motivates you to become a “resolutionary” in your life and a leader of others in practicing resolution, while at the same time appreciating the richness that the creative tension of differences provides.
6. Enable you to take personal responsibility for dealing with the opportunity of conflict, diversity, and disagreement.

This last goal is critical. We are living at a time of great opportunity. We can thrive if we design a world order that provides stability, optimizes natural resources, preserves the environment, controls population, and shifts our thinking from rights and entitlements to service and responsibility.

This process starts with each individual. You must tend your own garden. As a first step I encourage you to develop a spirit of resolution. Given our shrinking planet and the increasing transactions of our global village, learning to take responsibility for effective collaborations and resolving the inevitable conflicts is essential.

Now is the time to start working together more effectively!

The Contents

This book is based on four premises:

1. *Conflict is expensive in many ways.*
2. *Efficient conflict resolution requires a new paradigm of collaboration grounded on ten principles (delineated in Part II).*
3. *Efficient conflict resolution requires using a new systematic approach—a model that is applied consistently and that reinforces the new paradigm through routine use.*
4. *The resolution of conflict using the model returns you to productive living and functional relationships.*

Part I of the book sets out its context. Chapter 1 explains what resolution is and why it is so valuable. Chapter 2 details the ways that conflict is expensive—the great individual and collective cost we incur on a daily basis as we work within the standard ways of handling conflict. I list, illustrate, and explain the cost of conflict so you can appreciate the huge expense. You see that, under current practices, “winners” are losing. Capitalist culture is based on economics and profit. I hope recognition of all the costs will motivate you to use new practices.

Part II shares a case study that introduces the model for

resolution (Chapter 3) and gives an overview of the steps in the model (Chapter 4).

Part III explains the principles (new thinking) for resolving conflict. Current practices are based on an underlying set of beliefs, beliefs that may have served you in a world based on power and control. That world, I sense, is fading, and it's time to adjust your thinking. The new principles reflect current, more enlightened, thought. These principles are the foundation for new practices of the resolution model.

Part IV provides a more detailed explanation of the resolution model introduced in Part II. Part IV also demonstrates the model in action, embodying the values of the new principles. It shares some of the results that have been achieved by following the model.

Part V addresses how the new resolution principles and model fit within current standard ways of resolving conflict. It also introduces the experts available to help you use the new principles and model—what they do and how to choose one.

Part VI provides a peek into what it can be like if we follow the principles and practices of resolution.

How This Book Will Help You

The book is written for many groups. Everyone looking for a way to reduce the stress involved in collaborating with others, personally and in business, will find value. People who work with and for others will learn how to clarify their employment relationships.

For executives, managers, human resource and training personnel, business owners, and employees who must do more with less, this book will help increase productivity and improve communication and coordination among intercompany and intracompany teams.¹

Entrepreneurs and business developers who must build “virtual organizations” will find this book useful. For consultants, lawyers, architects, and accountants (whose business depends on satisfied clients), this book will provide tools for clearly articulating expectations and constructing sound business relationships from the beginning. For managers, executives, mediators, lawyers, and psychologists (the increasing cadre working in the field of conflict resolution), this book provides new tools and insights.

I hope that managers and organizational development consultants will use the models as the foundation for building and changing organizational cultures. I believe that culture reflects the quality and character of organizational relationships. And the quality and character of organizational relationships reflect the nature and quality of the web of implicit and explicit agreements that are the foundation and glue of organizational relationships. Organizational relationships, both internal and external, reflect and embody the culture. The sum of relationships is the culture!

People who desire social change will embrace the model. Individuals seeking formulas for more effective use of societal resources will value the way resources can be conserved. Folks who bristle at litigiousness will see that the number of lawsuits can be reduced if we adopt the new principles as primary values.

Consumers of legal services, and those who are afraid of legal services, will see potential for huge financial and emotional savings. People looking for a professional who will enter into a more heartfelt relationship based on a shared covenant will learn to identify such professionals and the standards that can be used to formulate a satisfactory and predictable collaboration-based relationship.

Married people, family members, and those in other part-

nerships can construct agreements to guide them to deeper connection, greater understanding, and less stressful relationships.

Beginner's Mind

Unfortunately, your impatience is likely to trump your desire to do things differently, so please be patient during the learning process. Please take on the dignity of a “beginner’s mind” as you try the new practices. Most of you want to be experts immediately. You want to conquer the expert slopes on the mountain, master the new software, or take off on your new computer with little practice. Cut yourself some slack in gaining comfort and competence with the new practices. It will be worth it.

Following the principles and the model will enhance the quality of your life, the lives of those around you, and the culture of your various communities. The principles embody values that we all want to embrace. The model is simple, but applying it is challenging. Using new practices and developing new habits requires mindfulness, commitment, and repetition. As you acquire competence, you will become artful in discerning how much formal attention to the steps in the model some situations require, and what steps are not necessary in other situations. At the beginning I suggest that you practice using every step. That will help you internalize all the principles and practices.

After the first edition was released, I realized a few critical components that contribute to comprehensive understanding of “sustainable collaboration” did not get the attention they deserved. I am grateful to have the privilege of supplementing the book with the hindsight of ten years and a great deal of client and audience feedback. I hope you appreciate the utility of the

changes as we navigate through a very challenging period of history. Twelve years ago I knew we had a universal problem. Our capacity to engage in civil discourse and dialogue, and to prevent or resolve conflict productively in critical public conversations, was sorely lacking. Unfortunately the last 12 years have not demonstrated progress. And the stakes are now higher!

This edition is motivated by a great sense of urgency. I just finished reading a marvelous book by David Korten called *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*. As we plod through a great economic meltdown I find myself reflecting on the public dialogue, or lack thereof, of the past dozen years. My assessment: Our leaders should all be fired for not taking care of the people's business. Our politicians behave as if it were the 1950s and all we have to do is to return to peacetime prosperity.

Instead of real dialogue about the pressing and urgent challenges we face—like terrorism, 9/11, Social Security, race relations, financial disparity, and climate change—our leaders continue lining up combatively along party lines no matter what proposal is put on the table. I can already see it happening with the new President's economic bailout, even within his own party. Rather than sitting down, exchanging ideas, and exploring common ground for some greater good, our leaders push forward with the ultimate antithesis of diplomacy and tact, engaging in a never-ending and debilitating game of "Gotcha!"

I can't help thinking that if our leaders had engaged in dialogue about matters of real substance we might have been able to focus on the pressing issues that continue to confront us. While Washington was playing politics, Social Security, Medicare, Iraq, Afghanistan, Fanny Mae, Freddie Mac, and Wall Street were ignored. And we are all picking up the tab for that.

A few years ago I was invited to speak to a group called Center City Proprietors Association (CCPA), the small business trade association for the city of Philadelphia. A couple of weeks beforehand, my friend Krista Bard, president of CCPA, asked if I would speak to the class of her ten-year-old son Alex when I was in Philadelphia. I said absolutely yes. A few days later I spoke with Alex's teacher and she told me that, in the wake of 9/11, the class had been working on something called "The Peace Table." The teacher was using it as a vehicle to keep the kids engaged in creating conversational tools for resolving conflict when questions arose about why the twin towers were targeted.

The evening before meeting the class I was still not sure what I was going to do with them, so I consulted Krista. She suggested that I do the same thing as I had done with the adults. So that's what I did.

Doing my best Mister Rogers imitation in a chair designed for a ten-year-old, I asked the kids what they use when they listen. The adults had hesitated. No such hesitation with the kids. A hand went up immediately and the first response was "my heart!" Krista and I looked at each other with wide eyes.

My immediate insight was that it does not need to take multiple generations to change mass consciousness and the requisite skill sets around conflict and collaboration. We just have to begin a massive educational campaign that provides alternative ways of thinking before kids are corrupted. Terrorists are not born, they are made by indoctrination. Partisan debaters—conservatives, liberals, radicals—are also made. I know we have the capacity to do much better!

Unfortunately, when "No Child Left Behind" became the banner for educational curricula, all else was dropped. My colleague, a noted specialist who wrote both kids' books and programs for conflict resolution, told me that all funds had

evaporated. She had to go back to classroom teaching after spending years traveling the country teaching teachers and those who teach them.

How did we get here, and how can we get out of here? That is the context from which I write. What most people do not realize is that the skills presented in this book are tools that are essential for democratic participation. I believe that as a civilization we are tottering on a dangerous precipice. To resolve many of our great challenges we must be able to engage in thoughtful and authentic dialogue. We have conquered outer space; our big challenge is conquering “inner space.” Given our current military capacity for destruction, if we cannot make the mental shift to fully engage in authentic conversation we risk the end of life as we know it.

The planet will survive. I’m not sure about our species!

I think learning the mindset, practices, and models set forth in this book is urgent. If we can develop our capacity to speak with each other we will be better able to connect with each other, and better able to address our pressing concerns. All else is moving deck chairs around on the Titanic.

As we move through the current economic crisis, many are suggesting the need for large-scale systemic change. A colleague, Christopher Avery, author of *Teamwork Is an Individual Skill*, recently labeled our current time as The Great Reckoning. I think the label is accurate. Given this time of reckoning, it seems important that we embrace communication and dialogue as essential to participating effectively in the democratic process. The bad news is that we have no choice but to engage, in part because people are sufficiently frightened. The good news is that there are tools available. I believe people will embrace new ways of interacting, and I hope you find some of them on the pages that follow.

Acknowledgments

Inspiration for this book came from many sources. Gus Lee, the author of *China Boy*, was critical. As director of the Office of Education of the State Bar of California, he reviewed a script I wrote for a mediation video and said, “You have a very important message to deliver to the public. I want you to write a book.”

From my parents, Adeline and Meyer, I learned about values, ethics, and integrity. They told me to find what I loved and success would follow. Susan Howard taught me to believe I was capable of accomplishing anything I wanted. John Haynes demonstrated the mood and process of mediation. I learned about leadership and resolution—my best work—from Marsha Shenk, who helped uncover the idea of “agreements for results.” Bud Seith personified male mothering. Marty Africa is a daily demonstration of courage, perseverance, responsibility, and commitment; I thank her for shelter in the storm. From my brothers Peter, Bill, Larry, Cliff, and Steve, I learned the joy of camaraderie. My sister Sharron has taught me about acceptance. I thank Tish for her joy. I thank David for being there, and for the example that he is. Heartfelt gratitude for the endorsers of this book, and to Joel Barker for the great foreword.

Thanks to the community of Berrett-Koehler authors, who are working to make a world that works for all. I thank Steve Piersanti, the founder of Berrett-Koehler, for recognizing the value of this project. His vision and nurturing of my ideas has been an extraordinary gift. Laurie Harper of the Sebastian Agency falls in that category. I thank Phillip Heller, Jeffrey Kulick, Annette Simmons, and Paul Wright, the readers who reviewed the manuscript, for their thoughtful comments. Special thanks to Charlie Dorris, Barbara Kimmel, and Judy Johnstone for their careful editing, and to Detta Penna for her

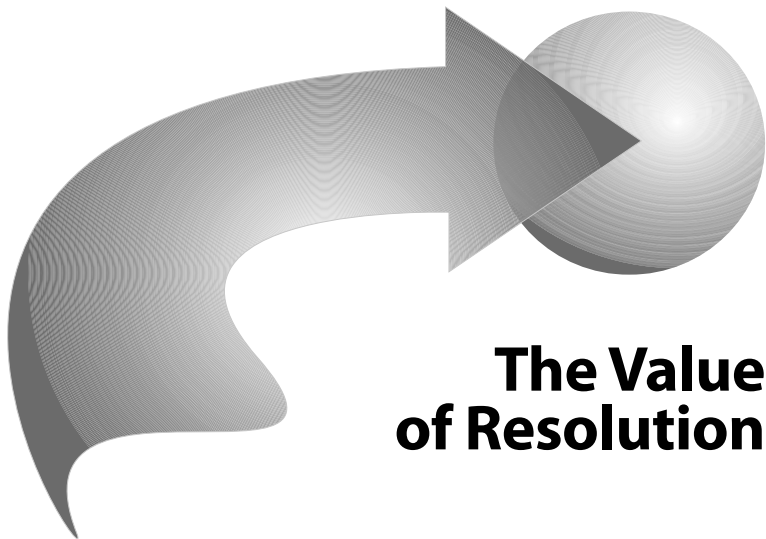
artful design work. I thank my clients and all who have attended my courses for their contributions to this body of work, and I thank the entire Berrett-Koehler staff for getting it out.

Most of all I acknowledge you, the reader. Thank you for your “resolve” to grow and to make your life—and the lives of those around you—more peaceful.

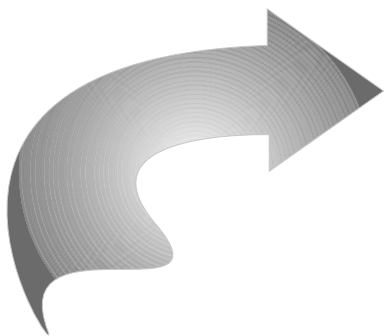
Stewart Levine

February 2009

Part I



The Value of Resolution



Resolution: Getting Beyond Conflict, Compromise, and Settlement

Through dialogue even the most un-resolvable conflicts can be worked out and everyone wins. The process did not include litigation or the emotional roller coaster ride that accompanies most conflicts. It was a delightful experience.

Bill Brown, President, Influence Communications

I remember being surprised when told that settlement of a lawsuit is often characterized by thinking that “if both sides are unhappy, you probably have a good settlement.” Resolution is much better than settling! Resolution provides relief and completeness. The situation no longer gnaws at your gut.

The most fitting dictionary definitions of resolution are: (1) the act of unraveling a perplexing question or problem; (2) solution; and (3) removal or disappearance, as in the disappearance of a tumor.

The third is the most important, even though often aspirational. It means “as if it never happened.” The gnawing effect I call “internal chatter” has disappeared. The lack of chatter frees you to focus energy and attention on the present. If you’ve ever had a back injury, poison ivy, or a broken bone, you know what I mean. Something is resolved when the injury or illness does not impede the present moment.

This is important. You don’t want to keep dealing with the current impact of yesterday’s conflict. The effect may consist of holding anger or resentment, or thinking the result or compromise was unfair. Perhaps you compromised to get the situation behind you, or you deferred to someone else’s decision.

Although at times I have tried not to, for more than 25 years—as a lawyer, mediator, consultant, and trainer—I have practiced a resolutionary³ attitude, one that looks for the fair outcome from everyone’s perspective. Whether you are a hired advocate or you have a personal stake in the outcome, you can adopt an “attitude of resolution.” Evaluating the situation through the lens of resolution, you become an observer of what might be fair to everyone in the situation, even if you are directly involved. Standing in other’s shoes provides the critical perspective. The attitude of resolution is a skill you can cultivate by being aware, reserving your own judgments, and asking yourself if there is another solution that would serve everyone’s long- and short-term interests. It takes practice to develop this new habit of thinking, but I have found this orientation far more useful than trying to win.

Why Resolution?

Have you ever met someone who could not stop talking about something that happened in the past? It pervades their life as if it happened yesterday, although it may have taken place 20

years ago. They are stuck in the past, cut off from the ability to fully participate in their unfolding life.

Conflict has an emotional cost that remains after the battle is over. Win or lose, the scars may be with you for the rest of your life. Some people spend their lives focusing on the promotion they “lost,” the business they “lost,” the divorce they “lost,” the project they “lost.” This tunnel vision keeps them locked in the grip of their own anger.

They might even have “won,” but they have not healed the real cause of the conflict—a breakdown in a relationship that was valuable enough for them to invest emotional energy in a battle. They never completed grieving and they still carry the emotional suffering. They never “resolved” the real issue. They may never even have identified it! Our current ways of thinking that focus on winning guarantee a cost: suffering. The small battles between partners, parents and children, and employees and bosses take a significant toll.

Productivity and satisfaction, in business and personal relationships, come from our ability to collaborate with others. When you are resolved, you can fully focus on the tasks at hand. Your efforts are undiluted. Unresolved conflict, on the other hand, is an impediment to productivity and to satisfying, functional relationships. In today’s world of “knowledge work,” focus and creativity are essential. It’s impossible to be fully productive when you are angry. That’s why resolving the situation that’s sapping your strength and attention is very important.

It is equally important to have a sense of resolve when you start any new collaboration or relationship. You collaborate with others by reaching agreements. Your dependence on others is based on an intricate, pervasive web of agreements. Sometimes these agreements are explicit, but often they are implicit. Your collaboration will be stronger when you can

recognize the implicit agreements within it. When you start out with uncertainty, or come into conflict during a project, you experience the cost of not being resolved from the outset. You also realize how inadequate your agreement-making and conflict-resolution tools are. Even though making agreements and resolving conflicts are essential life skills for working with others, they have not been taught to most of us.

Many current practices for resolving conflicts and starting collaborative relationships hinder us because of the way we were programmed to think, and because of the standard systems and practices in place. This book provides you with the following new tools:

1. Ten Principles of a new paradigm—a new way of thinking about conflict resolution.
2. The Cycle of Resolution, a seven-step model for preventing and resolving conflict that is a road map of new behaviors.

These ten principles and this seven-step model will maximize your ability to resolve conflict and achieve desired results in any business or personal relationship.

The Value of Resolution at Work

As organizations cut costs, differentiate products, and streamline productivity, people need to work within increasingly complex webs of face-to-face and virtual collaboration toward common goals. They need tools that foster collaboration in the face of distance and differences of opinion and “culture.” Rather than being angry and stuck, you must learn skills that foster resolution and quickly return you to productivity. This book presents the model for collaborative conversations that result in getting more done with fewer resources. This book

reveals how agreement—the final step of resolving a conflict or the first step in the beginning of a new relationship—is an ongoing process, and that conflict and diverse opinions are opportunities for creativity and innovation. You will learn how to establish agreements based on deep heartfelt connection—agreements based on covenant.

Some of the benefits of establishing agreements based on covenant include:

- Establishing shared vision of senior management
- Improving teamwork
- Creating partnership
- Motivating participation
- Including diverse perspectives and opinions
- Using differences productively
- Coordinating with external teammates
- Using resources efficiently
- Communicating more effectively
- Building self-managing, high-performance teams
- Forging consensus quickly
- Fostering an environment of learning and growth
- Promoting continual improvement
- Capitalizing on the advantages of virtual organizations
- Providing a more formal model of communication essential for effective virtual collaboration.

The Value of Resolution at Home

In addition to their applications in workplace settings, the tools in this book will unlock more satisfying and intimate personal relationships within marriages, families, and less

traditional partnerships that are part of our diverse social fabric. Because we usually think about personal relationships from an emotional and romantic perspective, it is difficult to accept that a linear process for resolving conflict and constructing agreements with specific promises about behavior will be helpful in producing more satisfying intimate relationships. My own experience leads me to suggest you bring the tools of this book into your personal life.

The Big Picture

One primary challenge in getting to resolution is reaching an agreement in principle—a broad understanding of what the resolution will be. Once you have an agreement in principle, the heavy lifting is done. Filling in the details of a new agreement can be an enjoyable exercise in visionary thinking. You get to an agreement in principle when you cross a self-imposed emotional barrier and can let go of a position you have taken. For most people, this is not easy. It may require going against a lifetime of dealing with conflict in a different way. The steps of the model are designed to get you beyond this hurdle.²

Getting beyond the emotional barrier is not like personal therapy. The internal work is accomplished as a result of *new thinking* (adopting the values of the ten principles) and *new actions* (following the steps of the model). Every step of the model contributes to resolution by making you speak your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about the conflict. Once your story is articulated and no longer purely emotional, you and others can deal with it.

Although the steps of the model seem linear, getting to resolution is not a linear process. Mechanically going through the steps will not lead to resolution unless you have embraced the values of the ten principles. Once you embrace the princi-

ples, you have embraced the model's first step, the Attitude of Resolution. Each successive step takes you toward resolution by making you go deeper into the personal, emotional, and human aspects of the conflict. You don't have to say yes to the principles because they feel good, seem right, or are morally or politically correct. It's fine to buy in because the cost of remaining in the conflict is too great. What is important is to get into the personal, emotional, and human aspects of the conflict. Regardless of what you *say* the conflict is about, the conflict is held as an emotional presence between you and at least one other person.

The new model provides a systematic approach. When you learn something new, it is important to have standard practices to follow. Standards provide guidance as you learn the new skill. When you learn to ski, drive a car, or fly an airplane, you put in place fundamentals that become unconscious habits. The model provides these fundamentals. Using the model develops habit and competence, and you discover the value of the principles. When you gain competence you will start to develop your own artistry—innovations within the standard practices. Once you internalize the principles and steps, resolution can happen quickly!

Personal Responsibility for the Value of Resolution

Most of us avoid taking personal responsibility for conflict resolution. Even though our culture is litigious, we lack the courage to connect deeply with others and we personally avoid confrontation. If we have a disagreement in a business transaction or with a neighbor, we may let a lawyer take care of it. If we have emotional conflict, we may visit a therapist or counselor who (we hope) will tell us what to do.

The symptoms of conflict are stress, pain, and discomfort. When you take personal responsibility, you can impact the

cause of the pain much faster than if you ask someone else to resolve the situation for you. Being responsible requires being open and vulnerable. If you are unwilling or unable to be authentic about your feelings, you may be quick to give up responsibility, and instead take false safety and security behind a more sterile, professional process. In doing that, you give up the potential of addressing your real concerns, getting to the core of the conflict, and reaching resolution.

Delegating conflict resolution to professionals who know how to diagnose and resolve your problems is a culturally learned response. But delegation compromises us when the professionals believe they are experts better equipped to make the key decisions that affect the core of our lives. Conflicts are filled with our feelings, and the professional to whom we hand the conflict does not have to live with the results of the resolutions.

This book is a call for personal responsibility. It asks you to adopt new practices, and to assume a new attitude in the world. It requests that you take personal responsibility for dealing with conflicts, differences, and disagreement, and that you become **ResponseAble**. Giving the process away deprives you of the satisfaction of “getting to resolution.” You are uniquely capable of designing the best resolution and you will have the energy for follow-through because you own the solution. By being involved you derive value, strength, and the sense of self that full participation provides. Of course, there will be times when you need help. This book provides the guidance you may need.

Learning New Behaviors

This book is a learning tool. My overriding concern is that you learn new thinking and new behaviors, new practices that will improve your professional and personal life. If you keep doing the same thing, you will keep getting the same results. Learning

is the ability to take new actions to achieve new results. Unless you implement new behaviors, you have not learned anything.

Resolution is simple, but it is not easy. This book will not be hard to understand. Your life experience has taught you many of the skills you need to master the art of resolution. The challenge is implementation—developing the habit of living the principles and behaviors on a daily basis.

In addition to my own experience, as background research for the first edition I spoke with more than a hundred senior conflict resolution professionals. Their insights validated many of the ideas in the book. And the ideas have been further validated by my experience over the last ten years. The stories in the book are true, although some of them are composites. They have been disguised to cloak the identity of individuals and organizations. You can be both facilitator and participant by internalizing the model and learning to become an observer of your situation. A goal of the book is for you to become “meta” to the situation—that is, you are outside or above it. I do it all the time, and you can too. The resolution principles and model can also be used for third-party interventions—when you try to help friends or co-workers resolve a conflict in which you are not personally involved, or as manager when you have direct responsibility.

I am inspired by the aim of resolution. I hope to inspire you. *Getting to Resolution* will teach you about patience, inquiry, learning, and expanding your perspective. The power and integrity of resolution leads to outcomes you cannot invent yourself. It's the difference between the sound of one hand clapping and two!

Getting to Resolution helps you understand what you already know about conflict. It shows you a simpler, more effective approach to reaching, modifying, and maintaining collaborative agreements, a key to your professional and personal success.

Summary

- Resolution is taking care of conflict so that there are no lingering aftereffects. It is better than compromising because the cost of the aftereffects is less.
- The key challenge is reaching agreements in principle. This becomes easier when we adopt the principles of Resolutionary Thinking and engage in the dialogues that the Cycle of Resolution prescribes.
- Resolution has great value at work, at home, and within yourself. It is a skill you can learn by developing the habit of the new practices.

Reflections

- How was conflict handled when you were a child?
- Have you adopted, without consciously choosing, the patterns you saw as a child? Do those patterns serve you?
- How do the ways you handle conflict make difficult situations worse?
- What would it be like if you could behave in ways that lead to the results you really wanted? How might your life be different?

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Turning Conflict into Collaboration
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by Steward Levine

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