

Notes from *Transformations and Renewals 2012*

Clarity Please!

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.
(1 Corinthians 14:33)

One of the discussion topics of the *2012 Transformations and Renewals Conference* held over the weekend of October 13/14 in West Point, Tennessee, was "People." We talked about a lot of things: how important it is to find a community of people who share our own particular values and goals, how often finding that kind of community is difficult, how the internet both helps to develop communities (after all, we were at this conference because of the internet) yet how the internet at the same time both fights against communities and creates false ones (as in the example of Facebook "friends"). We talked about how do deal with fear (of terrorists, of climate change, carbon footprints, epidemics, politician "A" or politician "B," "kill shots" from the sun, the list keeps going), and how important it is to find people who we can trust and what we can do when our trust is betrayed. It was a very interesting four hours spent thinking over these issues together. But at the end we were a bit surprised when we discovered that fundamental to all of our talk was the matter of *CLARITY*.

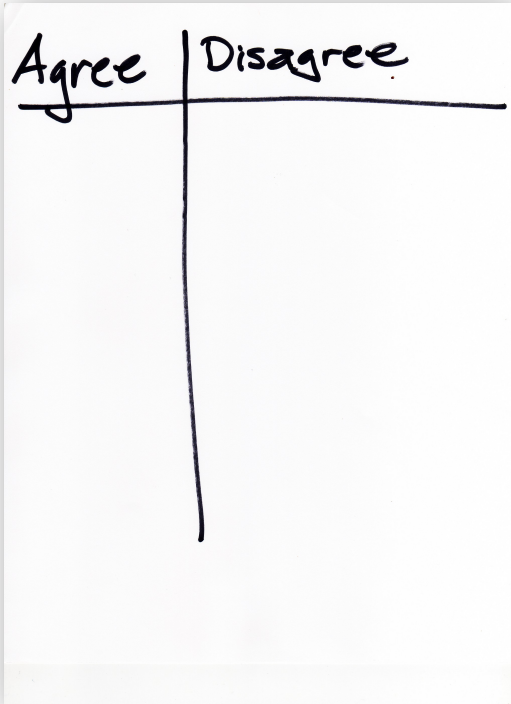
Before we can have a community, before we can enjoy fully trusting relationships, before we are able to deal with those lists of boogiemens -- even before we know how to deal with betrayal -- we need *clarity* (which we took as synonymous with *truth* and *honesty*). We need true information about and a clear understanding of what actually is going on in our businesses, in our towns and counties and in national politics. We need to clearly understand what both drives the kind of things we're taught and the ways in which we're taught them, we need to clearly understand what's in the food we're eating and what's in the air we're breathing. We need clarity about the actual buying power of our currency and the purity of our drinking water. And when we have clarity about these matters, on that foundation, on the foundation of clarity, we can start to build the relationships that are essential to our financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual well being.

And if *clarity* is so important for well being, we can flip that idea, looking at its opposite, and see how deeply problematic *unclarity*, or confusion, is.

At this point Catherine Austin Fitts introduced a grid that demonstrates this relationship. Like the her "Popsicle Index" that marks the health of a community in a particularly simple way (The Popsicle Index is the percentage of people who believe a child can leave her home, go to the nearest place to buy a popsicle or

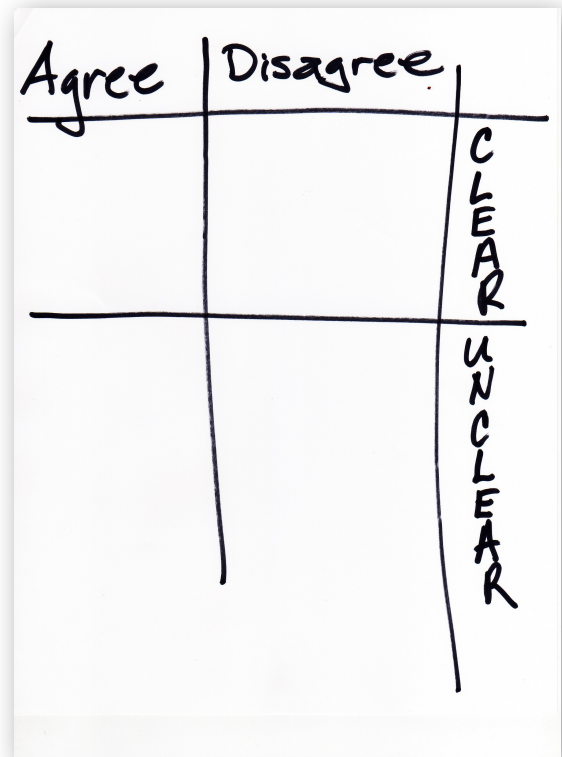
snack, and come home alone safely), this four square grid maps how important clarity is, and how dangerous confusion can be. And it's really simple.

Take two basic things: *Agree* and *Clear*. And then take their opposites: *Disagree* and *Unclear*.

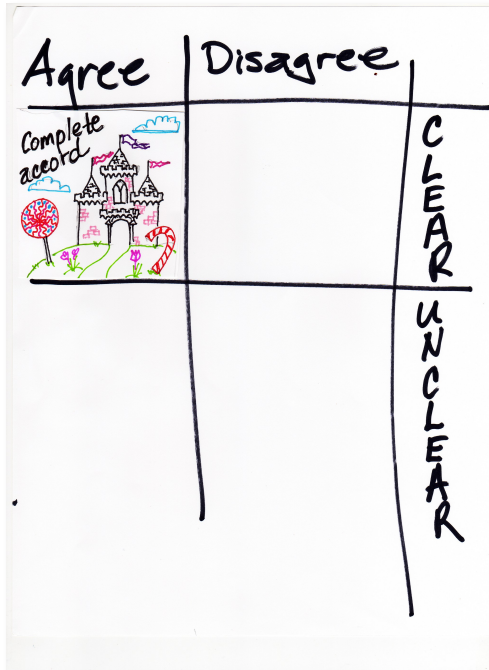


Create a grid of the opposites: *Agree* and *Disagree*.

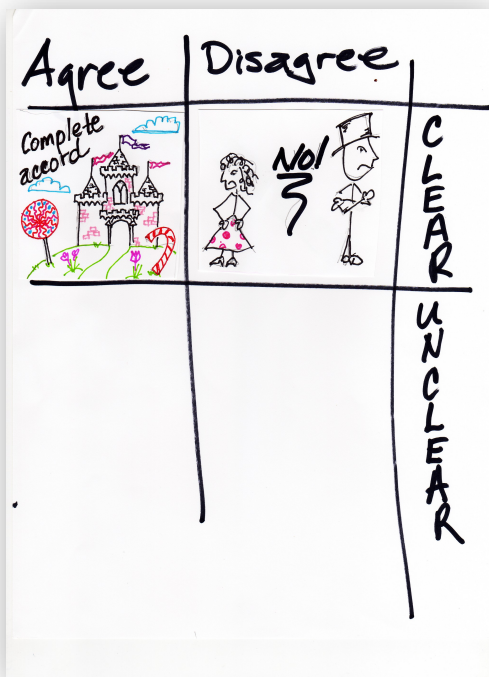
Then intersect this with a grid of *Clear* and *Unclear*.



Now we have a simple chart of fundamental relationships with four boxes. Let's look at the box in the upper left corner : *Agree/Clear*.



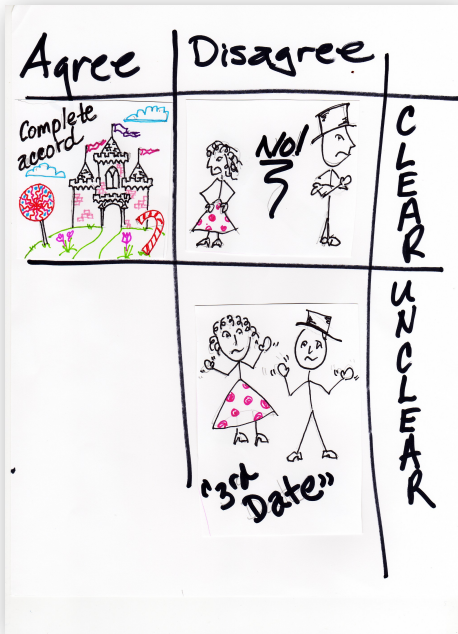
This is when we are in complete agreement with someone or about some thing and we are clear about pm what we agree. There's no ambiguity here, we have complete clarity. This is the land of lollipops and candy canes, Prince Charmings and beautiful princesses. It's our optimal state and the one for with we strive. *Agree/Clear* characterizes complete trust in relationships, whether they are in business or in personal relationships -- and here there is very little difference between the two since with *Agree/Clear* a business relationship *is* a personal relationship.



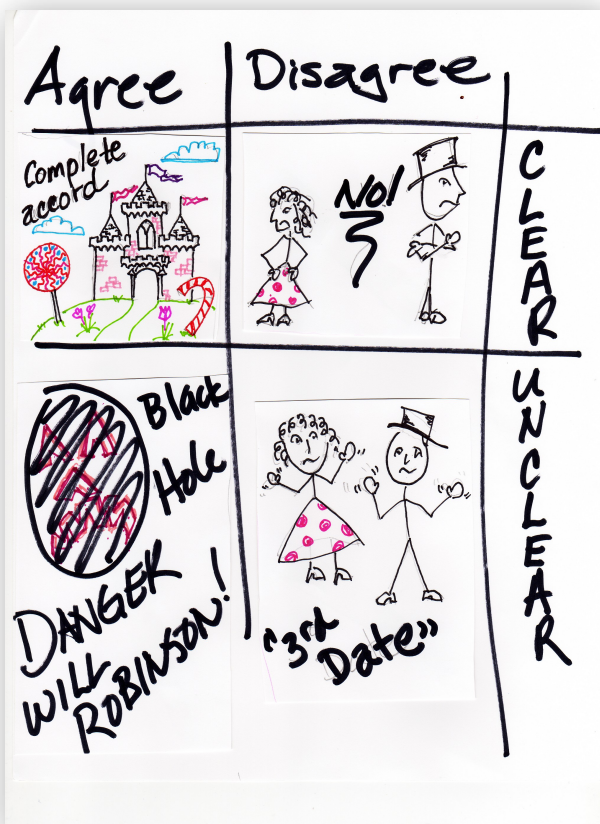
Across from this, in the upper right corner, we have *Disagree/Clear*. This really isn't the opposite of the *Agree/Clear* (we'll get to that in a minute) but is of course quite different from it. Here we disagree with someone or about some thing, perhaps quite strongly, but we know why we disagree. There's no ambiguity about our position as well as the opposition's. This doesn't mean that in a *Disagree/Clear* situation we can't work with the other side, frequently we can. We can say, "I don't think your position is right at all. It won't work and here are the reasons why. But we can try your way for six months and if I'm right, and it doesn't work, we will try my approach." The positions are clearly laid out, there's no confusion about them, and limited, or temporary, cooperation is possible. Of course too, here we might

be required to simply walk away from the situation, recognizing that our opposing

positions are antithetical and irreconcilable and that cooperation is impossible. But here the reasons for the division are clearly understood by all parties. There's no confusion about why we can't work together and all sides move on.



The lower right hand corner is *Disagree/Unclear*. We called this "the third date." It was OK for a while but things don't seem to be working out and the relationship isn't going anywhere; we're not sure why so we shrug our shoulders. We disagree but we're not clear exactly about what we disagree or why. And we're not sure that it's all that important enough for us to try to figure things out; but maybe it is, but maybe it isn't. It's an area of floundering and thrashing about, a lot of splashing and kicking in the pool but we're not particularly swimming anywhere.



But the bottom right corner, the *Agree/Unclear*, is the danger spot. It's the black hole. If *Agree/Clear* is the optimal condition -- and it is -- then *Agree/Clear* is its opposite, it's the worst place to be and the most dangerous. It's dangerous because here we can be in relationships that we think are built on clarity, or assume so, yet are not. There are fault lines in the relationships, lines that when they break apart are dangerous, possibly even deadly to our economic and emotional well being. We all know long marriages that have been suddenly been split by divorce, one party saying things like, "I've haven't loved you for twenty years." That's a good example of *Agree/Unclear* where both parties were in the

relationship for reasons that were never clearly understood (in that example one reason is "I love you." The other is "I haven't until now thought that divorce was worth the effort").

Businesses are damaged when the partners are unclear about the company's goals. *Agree/Unclear* can be both an area of purposeful deception and wishful thinking, both of which thrive on untruths. And of course *Agree/Unclear* is the region of spies and con artists (a good decent criminal is in the *Disagree/Clear* area, there's no ambiguity about "Hands up! Your money or your life!").

Our goal is to live above the *Clear* line. Under the *Clear* line, in both the *Agree/Unclear* and *Disagree/Unclear* boxes, we are in relationships that drain our financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual resources. Those resources can even be completely drained away. Above it we're in situations where we can use our time and our resources most effectively. Thrive above the line. Thrash about -- and maybe even drown -- below it.

-- Mike Linton