

The Co-operative Mode

How does an organisation maximise cooperation, productivity, and open communication while creating a culture of inclusion and participation?

The Family Action Centre was fortunate enough to become aware of a tool for workplace cooperation, harmony and productivity called “The Cooperative Mode”. The Cooperative Mode is based on the assumption of *abundance* as opposed to *scarcity*, and *cooperation* as opposed to *competition*. This powerful tool consists of a deceptively simple eight points on one sheet of paper, but is in fact a life-long learning experience, and a road map for profound personal and organisational change.

The Co-operative Mode is based on Transactional Analysis, and was introduced to the FAC by Mr Jack Guillebeaux who facilitated much of the early staff development work. The Co-operative Mode addresses the fundamental characteristics of human interactions, endeavouring to keep them free of contamination through secrets and lies, unshared resentments, paranoia, and power plays and enriching them through the offering of positive affirmations, being personally accountable etc.

All FAC staff members were trained in the various aspects of the Cooperative Mode, and it eventually was used in the recruiting process at the Family Action Centre. Potential employees were asked to read the eight points prior to interview and then asked in interview how they responded to it. The process proved to have a self-selective function, with at least one applicant withdrawing during the interview stage in response to the guidelines. Applicants who were consequently employed were in essence agreeing to respect the guidelines of the Co-operative Mode.

Knowledge of the Cooperative Mode alerts potential workers to the kind of organisation they might be joining and the behavioural obligations that will be expected. It offers current staff potent guidelines to practise positive, productive cooperative interactions with integrity.

Practising The Cooperative Mode has transformed many organisations throughout the world. It of course requires training for staff and diligent application, but the rewards of straight communication, less time spent resolving conflicts, and

a joyful, harmonious work environment are worth the investment of time, energy, commitment and staff training.

The Co-operative Mode is a set of simple yet powerful tools that are used in organisational and community development. It is also well suited for relationships and family settings. The Co-operative Mode provides a framework for building and evaluating evolving cooperative relationships in every area of our lives.

Its application can transform organisations, relationships and families as it empowers individuals to create harmonious and productive work environments and relationships, while recognizing that each individual is 50 % of all transactions with another person.

The Co-operative Mode comprises 8 basic components.

Three of these are behaviours that we ask people **not** to engage in:

1. No power plays: a power play is defined as attempting to force someone to do something they basically don't want to do or are not ready to do, whether subtly and covertly or openly and abusively.
2. No rescues: a rescue is doing something for someone which they can do for themselves, doing something without being asked or doing more than one's 50% share of the interaction.
3. No secrets or lies: defined as withholding or misrepresenting one's feelings, motives or position. This is detrimental in that they discount and discredit the intuition of others who may have guessed the truth of the situation. Secrets and lies also tend to erode trust and generate suspicion and insecurity.

Five of the components are behaviours that we ask people **to** engage in:

4. Accounting: means when an individual becomes aware of some behavior s/he engaged in which may have negatively impacted others s/he will voluntarily name and acknowledge the behavior, explore and explain the reason for the behaviours, and commit to choose an alternative course of action under similar circumstances in the future.
5. Giving of Strokes: acting out on the assumption of abundance of strokes and giving and receiving freely. Building a good stroke economy is so important to community development that Strokes and Stroke Economy are offered separately as an individual tool.
6. Checking out Paranoid Fantasies (paranoid = suspicious, distrustful, fearful, mistrustful, obsessed, unreasonable: a process of identifying our suspicions about the behaviour or intentions of others and checking them against the truth.

7. Offering Resentments: a way of releasing negative feelings about another individual or group of individuals. Resentments are shared as a first step of restoring the relationship to a state of mutual love, caring, trust, etc. Resentments should be shared if the other person agrees to hear them. The individual to whom the resentment is being offered does not have to respond as s/he has only agreed to hear the resentment.

8. Confidentiality: offers protection that the expression of real feelings will not be used in the future in any way without the expressed agreement of the individuals involved.