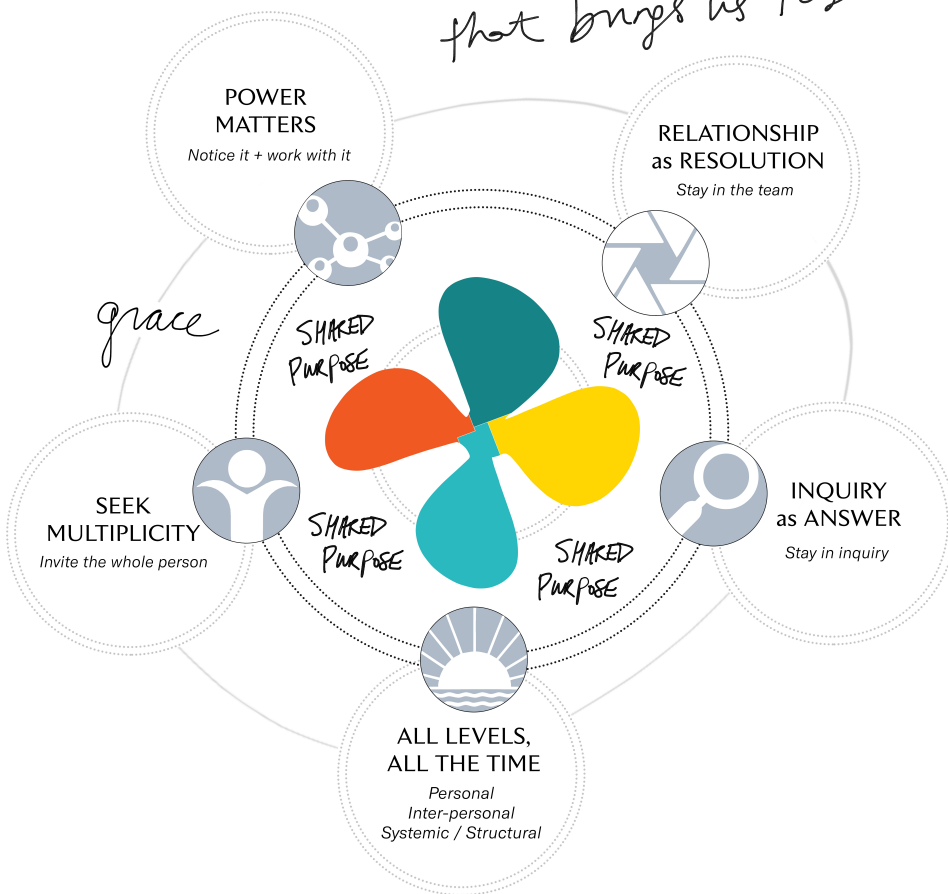


Shared Work

The Shared Work model puts getting to work back at the centre of our collaborations. We developed this simple model after years of working with folks who had passion and commitment for making change in their systems and organizations, but struggled to figure out how to work together over time.

SHARED WORK

The work is the container that brings us together



Often, differences between collaborators—perspectives, backgrounds, ideologies, aspirations—becomes the focus of meetings rather than getting work done together.

Shared Work is a way for us to take the next step together to begin to move forward on those issues and challenges we care about in our organizations, communities, and systems.

In groups that have been successful in working together over time, there seem to be five key stances the group is able to adopt in relation to their work together.



Shared Work

Often the differences between collaborators — different perspectives, backgrounds, ideologies and aspirations — becomes the focus of meetings rather than getting work done together. Shared Work offers a way for us to think about taking the next step together to begin to move forward on those issues and challenges we care about in our organizations, communities, and systems.

In groups that have been successful in working together over time, there seem to be five key stances the group is able to adopt in relation to their work together.

RELATIONSHIP AS RESOLUTION — At times the issues we are working on together are so complex, so deep seated, and so full of history, that a resolution of the issue is impossible in the moment. It doesn't mean that we stop working on the issues, but it does mean that sometimes our ability and willingness to stay in relationship is the resolution. As we are in relationship with each other, we can figure out how to work with the issue, what our next step should be, and how we'd like to move to more resolution.

INQUIRY AS ANSWER — When we are working with challenges we don't know how to solve, we can be tempted to rely on answers we've tried in the past or best practices we've heard from other places. We're tempted to try harder with what we already know how to do. This stance asks the group to identify the questions or inquiries we should be in together to move toward new solutions. It begins from a place of "not knowing" — a risk for people who have expertise and passion for an issue! — and a commitment to work from that place together.

SEEK MULTIPLICITY — When we invite others into collaboration, we often do so from a representative mindset: Who/what constituency does this person represent? Representation is important, but it only gives us a partial understanding of those we are working with. Seeking multiplicity as a stance encourages us to invite the whole person into the collaboration with their multiple roles, identities, and perspectives. Allowing the fullness of each person we are working with leads us to better, more robust solutions.

ALL LEVELS, ALL THE TIME – When working collaboratively, we should be aware of the different levels that are present in our work: personal, interpersonal, organizational, systemic, and structural. Each of these plays out in all of our interactions, and while our collaborative work may focus on a particular level, it is important to understand that each level impacts and informs the other. We can make strategic choices on where we will intervene, but we need to understand that all levels are operating on the issue at all times.

POWER MATTERS – Considering power in our collaborations is key. We cannot ignore how power plays out in our relationships, our understanding of the issue, and the action we take. Understanding different types of power – not painting “power” with a broad brush! – as well as making strategic choices in our action related to power, can ensure that our shared work is successful.