



# Conscious Communication

## Vision

*"It is not things that upset us, but how we hold them." - Epictetus, Greek slave philosopher*

Our emotions are intertwined with our wants and desires. Often we find ourselves having an emotional reaction when our desires are not met.

Our desires can be conscious or unconscious, and consist of our expectations, assumptions, beliefs and values. In other words, a belief, vision or an idea of how we want things to happen. When our experience matches our expectations, we feel comfortable, but when it does not, we may experience various kinds of uncomfortable emotional reactions.

These reactions provide us with a bio-feedback message to look inside ourselves and become conscious of our wants and desires.

Our wants and desires--our visions, can be vague, subjective, conceptual, often unconscious. They consist of what mediators and negotiators often call "interests." They are the underlying concerns which motivate us in a given situation.

If we can identify our underlying visions or interests, it can help us in negotiations. For example: a divorced couple with a child were negotiating the father's visitation rights. The mother did not want to give the father as much access to the child as he wanted because she herself wanted minimal contact with him. It became a battleground, a power struggle. He got worked up and resentful because he could not make any headway and felt that she held all the power. The more he pushed, the more she dug in her heels.

However, when they looked at the visions they were each holding, they were very similar. They both wanted their child to have a healthy upbringing. When the focus shifted from how often the father could visit, to what would be best for the child, the mother was able to see that her child needed a good relationship with her father. The father realized that he was forcing the wrong issue and backed off on the power struggle.

The "grand" vision is the dream, in some form, that we will all be happy, healthy and holy. Although we hold this vision, it is sometimes hard

to see or find because of the way we frame our wants. We can get stuck thinking that we want a particular thing, without realizing that there are many ways to reach our visions.

Some useful questions to ask are: What will be fulfilled if you get what you want? What is important to you about what you want? Why do you want it?

A young man knew very clearly that he wanted a million dollars. He was asked what he would do with the money. He said he would buy a yacht and invite all his friends and relations to a party on it. When probed further, it turned out he wanted to prove to them that he had "made it," that he WAS somebody. He thought a million dollars could buy him self-esteem. He was not seeing that his vision was to have self-esteem, and that his desire for a million dollars was simply a means to his vision that he was attached to.

Similarly, some people think that a million dollars would give them a sense of security, that having money in the bank would relieve the stress of  
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living and give them a feeling of comfort. But not necessarily. Seeking security outside ourselves in the form of assets has its own stresses. There are no guarantees that it will be worth anything when you want it. Look at inflation in prewar Germany as an extreme example. A wheelbarrow full of currency was not worth a loaf of bread.

“Security” is a vague notion, a vision without definition. What is security after all? A million dollars in the bank? A million dollars will not help you determine who your real friends are, and who just wants your money. It will not give you security from illness, hurricanes, floods or automobile accidents. Security is more about an internal process in which we feel confident that we will be able to handle problems that arise.

A million dollars may feel like one way to achieve this, but it is not the only way. This is the difference between a vision and a position. The vision (i.e. self-esteem or security) is a vague idea or notion of something we want. The position (i.e. I want a million dollars) is our best guess of how to fulfill that want. But we can get caught in the position that there is only one particular solution or action which will fulfill our vision.

In negotiating we want to separate visions from positions/solutions, and to be creative about the possibilities for realizing our desires.