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CARRYING PARCELS AND MAKING PUDDINGS: TWO CO-OPERATION STYLES

ABSTRACT
Parcel carrying and pudding making are two styles of co-operation. In work and family contexts mis-matches may occur between people who hold differing co-operative styles. This may accentuate parcel carrying and pudding making behaviour. Consultation to such systems involves helping participants articulate the belief systems that underpin both co-operative styles and negotiate a novel plan for co-operation that allows both styles find expression.

INTRODUCTION
Everybody has their own way of co-operating. Parcel carrying and pudding making are two extreme co-operation styles.

PARCEL CARRIERS
Parcel carriers like to co-operate by taking a parcel and delivering it. They like to be given the parcel, the delivery address and nothing more. They take pride in finding their way and delivering the parcel alone. They like reading the map and planning the journey in privacy. They love the clarity of the delivery process. They revel in the adventure of the solitary journey. They like to meet with their companions afterwards and bask in the appreciation which follows a delivery well done.
PUDDING MAKERS

Pudding makers like to co-operate by helping with the nitty gritty of measuring and mixing all the ingredients for the pudding. They like to pass the raisins to you. They like to weigh the flour while you pour the milk. They love to take their turn at stirring the mixture. They like to discuss whether some more of this or a little of that should be added. They like to consider and reconsider how best to finish the job. They are warmed by the chat that goes with sharing a kitchen. They thrive on the complex ways people making a pudding can vary the recipe form minute to minute. They love to sit back and have a cup of tea afterwards and enjoy the companionship that follows from making a pudding with someone else.

MIS-MATCH

Problems occur when parcel carriers assume that pudding makers hold the same world view as they do and visa versa. Here are two typical examples of this type of mismatch.

Example 1. Robert and David, while on a communications training programme mentioned the following difficulty. Both men worked together in a management consultancy. Robert liked to work at close-quarters with David, conducting joint interviews with clients, writing reports jointly and operating in a shared office environment. He was continually frustrated by David's reluctance to work in this way, since joint work often yielded their most creative results. David conducted as many interviews as possible alone and always retired to an isolated office to write reports or took his work home with him. He was annoyed that Robert wanted to work jointly all the time and sometimes suspected that Robert was trying to freeload. This made him more adamant about working on discrete aspects of joint projects in isolation.

Example 2. Tony and Susan during marital therapy revealed that most of their arguments occurred on weekends, when Susan would suggest joint shopping expeditions or joint completion of the housework. Tony would go along with these suggestions but gradually feel angrier and angrier over the course of the joint work. This would lead to bickering and periodically to explosive rows, where he insisted on a clear division of labour at week ends and no further joint completion of chores. Susan would interpret this as rejection and go to great lengths to cajole Tony into joint shopping and
housekeeping. Tony would eventually accommodate to joint approaches to homemaking tasks and the cycle would repeat.

Figure 16.1. Carrying parcels & making puddings: Two co-operation styles

In the first example, David, a parcel carrier, demanded that Robert conform to his style of co-operation. In the second example, Tony, a parcel carrier by nature, was trying to conform to Susan's requirement that he be a pudding maker. Both mismatches led to the participants feeling misunderstood and also to them drawing erroneous conclusions. For example, David concluded that Robert wanted to freeload and Susan believed that Tony wanted to reject her. These erroneous beliefs sparked more extreme parcel carrying or pudding making behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

Mismatches between parcel carriers and pudding makers at work or in family life can rarely be avoided. However, the negative consequences of such mismatches can be minimised. Consultants and therapists can first help parcel carriers and pudding makers articulate their differing belief systems about co-operation. A clear articulation of both world views will help dispel erroneous beliefs that come from a partial understanding of each position. Co-operative planning about which style of co-operation to use in which situation follows on from this first step.