

Let Your 'no' Mean "NO!"

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Learning to Get Along In Community

by

M. Emily E. Windsor-Cragg, BS, MA
San Jose California
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PREFACE

In community we want to feel heard. We want our dreams to be possible and do-able. But we're all different. Is this a problem? Looking at the seas and forests and meadows, Diversity rules. No one specie dominates; and when one group gets too large, it wrecks everything. So to with Society. There is No One Way DEAL. We the diverse human family must learn how to get along. This Book explores some ideas, just how to do that. Have fun with it! It's NOT gospel, after all! If we can conceive of Peace, we can DO it. With God's help.

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Diversity UK/USA

A Lifestyle for the 21st Century

First, let's see where we are. We are NOT, as the Qumran community HAD to, passing hot and arid desert scapes. Ours is a different aeon, a different set of circumstances God has given us to contend with--cold and not heat--with deteriorating atmosphere and pollution.

Also, we're due for a pole flip and new ice age. But let's not worry about it now. We have a life to think about.

Our children are our futures

CHERISH THE CHILDREN

LOVE--AS PHILOS--IS FROM GOD

- 737--Devote yourself to assessing behavior and loving the child.
- 747--Attain doctrines that make sense, not arbitrary Rules.
- 757--Favor your children by prompting them in the present, not by berating them for the past.
- 767--Learn to cope with each child's point-of-view that their Souls take.
- 777--Stimulate activities without exhausting their Spirits.
- 786--What needs to be Real is "How to Function in the World."
- 685--What must find Focus is promoting THEIR perspective.
- 584--What makes child-rearing so exhausting--it's their life.
- 483--Buy into whatever process creates Competence--nothing less.
- 382--Adopt whatever tools of the Spirit [education] you can GET.
- 281--Understand that Health is central to a sound mind,
- 181--and learn how to identify and promote Good Health in your child.

- 192--Think about the kind of Lifestyle that will promote THIS child.
- 202--Put your heads together, and think about the Child's Future.
- 212--Be aware of your child's dealings; and keep NO secrets either.
- 222--Let your commitment to the child become a mutual commitment.
- 232--It's okay to want to belong as a family, to your child's Life.
- 242--It's Fair to discipline your child, no matter at what age.
- 252--Always promote the response that says, "My folks love me."
- 262--Speak out of Clarity, not from Ego, Exhaustion or Despair.
- 272--Speak of what is Just, What is Fair, and what is Merciful.
- 282--Know your child's Spirit at every Age and Station.
- 293--Confront their lives as if they were your own--to gain Clarity.
- 303--Frame the relation between you and your child as a prototype that God gives all His children, to satisfy Grace.

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Driving inland away from the sea past the first set of foothills, there is a plateau that juts up for about fifty miles north-to-south along the length of the broad valley floor as you drive inland toward the mountains. We're actually at an elevation of about 1800 feet on top of that plateau. And if you turn off at the correct side road, you will enter a hollow where the land is deeply forested and sparsely populated as the mountains are farther on, but close in and in a political no man's land (which is convenient for maintaining separation).

Diversity is a community -- as Qumran was -- living its values. That means, all the residents of the community operate from personal choice, and choices differ. Everybody acknowledges "that Of God" in everyone else. And three strains of spirituality operate side-by-side--people who "Abide With Favor" (by Holy Law); those who live by "Simple Faith" (the Book), and people of honor who are a-theists and agnostics conforming to a form of honesty bounded by pacifism, vegetarianism and inner silence.

We all live together in peace. For our readers who do not believe in God, let our results, effects and outcomes be testimony to the integrity of our intentions and behavior.

Residents stay because they want to live this way for INNER reasons, and they are NOT simply following their own "Personal Preferences," but what is comfortable has a wide range of expression, even here.

Affiliation

Personal preferences do not control us. Remember, Moses was not asking the Israelites about their personal preferences. Nor did Jesus advocate that His disciples live by their personal preferences, although Jesus did give his apostles authority to determine how each community would settle its personal differences and set itself apart from the dominant societies of His day. Yet personal preferences among His followers varied, even as they operated by the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The fact that people who live here in Diversity are willing to bend on personal preferences means they are also willing to come to consensus about the meaning of each element of life here. This is odd, you say. What do you mean, they "come to consensus" on ... the meaning of things?

Cooperation

This means we have different layers of participation -- Visitors, "plebes," law-full residents, spiritual guides, occasional members and former members.

It means we have layers of obedience : obedience to social customs, obedience to Law, and obedience to God, which is unconditional when it is present.

It means, every person who comes here has the potential to be a Bride of the Christ or a spiritual Adept or a monk or nun or devotee; but not everyone makes all the choices and operates from the selflessness that makes becoming a chaste Bride a do-able goal.

In fact, since most our members come here after they no longer can find work "in the world," very few weddings here are of young virgins; most are re-marriages and hand-fastings.

Since it's a person's associates and relations that define a person in community, how the choice is made to marry is central to one's decision for a life purpose. Careless marriages occur among our visitors; persistent marriages occur among those who maintain God's Law as Holy; but mere hand-fasting gives way to an eternal coupling when two virgins who have never touched nor been intimate, kiss for the very first time at their own wedding.

Chastity

People who come to us, pay us money and take their chances to be here. But if they want to stay, then they prepare the way for their own children to live as eternal sons of God.

Generally, it takes two or three generations for a visitor's commitment to "behave" to be fulfilled as grand-children or great-grand-children who are chaste, truth-telling and courageous in their devotion to principle.

For reverent atheists and agnostics, I can only say, "The CAUSE must be sufficient to produce any effect. Whatever--or Whoever--permits humanity and ourselves to exist also indulges a large number of other life forms. God loves all Life forms. We enjoy the freedom that comes by day-to-day communion with Nature with animals and with each other--one and all.

What Diversity means is, each and every act, bid, and motion has meaning here because we choose to have it so. We chose to impute honor to simple work, to impute strength to pacifism, to impute integrity to different strands of behavior. But we also chose to specify all these choices among ourselves, so a culture emerges here in which every "thing" and every "thought" counts for something.

Modesty

The way people dress has meaning; the times they work and don't work are known and understood and have meaning. What is visible or not visible has meaning.

What is FREE or not free has meaning. Who is a resident or not has a commonly-understood set of criteria.

What is done or not done on the sabbath is commonly understood. How to deal with trash and refuse has a commonly understood meaning, just as dealing with language has a commonly understood meaning around what nouns and verbs DO.

The culture is taught from the ground UP, so there are few opportunities for REAL ignorance or controversy. This place practices Peace. People who find they don't want to do this, simply leave.

We recycle!

When we adopted a lifestyle devoted to commonalities, we remind ourselves, each resident has made a conscious choice to participate. Most

Diversity residents come from different places, perspectives and ideologies, and we have all 'been to town.' Life in Diversity is full, and we're permitted to be more different than alike.

It's accepted that problems will arise; and there are processes to deal with what arises. But we are all invested in the spiritual life, the inner life in one form or another. That is our common experience. Whether we acknowledge "God" or not, we acknowledge the benign intentions that "religions" have always purveyed as "coming from God."

Our way of life permits people to attach and detach, come and go seamlessly as their commitment to God and community ebbs and flows. What is constant however is, life here is harmless, economical, simple, and very, rich. It would take centuries for a resident to infer--let alone master--all the subtleties of life with which we abide that can be articulated here. The only real issue is whether an individual is willing to give up preferences to adopt a peaceful system.

Rational as it all may be to "consensus of the body," everyday living in Diversity still cannot please everybody who tries to live it, because we work at being an "ordered flock" yet keep very individual inner lives and personalities.

We will allude to the seamlessness of life in Diversity from time to time, and by seamlessness what we mean is that you will not observe anybody EVER telling anybody else what to do. All actions, choices, and tasks are voluntary by individuals who are simply responding to whatever is arising.

There are NO RULES to point at, only Values spoken. There are no signs to "Keep Off The Grass," or "No Parking," or "Don't Stick Your Gum To the Underside of the Table." Life is lived here so that what is appropriate is what is obvious to everyone. Those who choose to follow what is appropriate, stay. Those who have a Will to do something else, are facilitated to leave.

At the same time we all acknowledge the perversity of human life. I mean, What makes men chase women they have no intention of marrying? . . . The same urge that makes dogs chase cars they have no intention of driving. So, we stopped trying to guess intentions, and just take note what happens next. If it's good, that's fine; but if it's bad, well, it's bad. So, stop it!

Enter here

Driving north and approaching Diversity from the northeast, on your right there is a long hedgerow forming a boundary between the Village and your car on the highway. The hedgerow serves the function of keeping trained and untrained geese and small children off the road. When you look into the Village Drive on your right, you see a neat, gravel road narrowing significantly to just six feet wide, and the road is one way--leading off north but curving to the west.

You will not be able to park inside the village; so why not find us a space over here (pointing across the road) where the gravel parking area is. We'd better lock it up.

There's a loo here on the parking lot, and a few produce stalls from May until October, and the jitney will pick us up from here.

Stop by

On this parking lot a shaded produce stand is all we have so far; but we hope in the near future to generate more cash for taxes and other expenses by building a small pavilion here and an enclosed "mall" fashioned out of a simple warehouse with individual stalls.

Some possible businesses that might work out for us would be a crafts & consignment shop, a pawn broker, a snack shop, a gas pump and garden shop for local herbs and flowers.

While we're walking over to the Manager's office, let me tell you why I buy in to this whole scene. I've really gotten a lot out of the disciplines that come with living here. One of the benefits of the practices of daily journal-writing and weekly group problem-solving sessions is, we live our wisdom.

Whatever I discover during my workweek that AFFECTS anybody, I bring to the attention of the group. As a result, the town has developed stock remedies for many problems that we all can apply, and I feel as if I have some say in what's going on here.

For example, included in our knowledge of public health is how to avoid arthritis, constipation, foot fungi, dark age spots, mental confusion, circulatory problems, STDs and flu and colds. We address such problems and nip them in the bud. Nobody prefers a macrobiotic diet; but that's what we have.

Nobody prefers sweat lodges, mud baths and limits on pleasure; but that's what we do so we don't have the outcomes we don't want. A resident who balks on any point of health will move out just as soon as they come down with the symptoms of the problem we agreed we would act to prevent. They feel guilty, so they leave.

We're not free to be unhealthy nor unwholesome--not here, and not on purpose. Passive resistance doesn't work out.

Cherish children

Due to close proximity of our Village to technology outside, we avoid working for or with any business that does not adhere to a strict policy of utilizing renewable resources.

While it is true, some Christians work wherever else they want in addition to their work hours here to and buy whatever they want to have, the Village is organized the way our Village is organized; and "working to obtain stuff" is not part of Village philosophy.

Those who insist on working outside, also live outside as associate members. We are harsh in this respect.

And looking at long-term goals, we accept that all experiences leading to Peace-on-earth are not easy nor simple, nor do they always feel good. Pretending to be happy is not our practice. We bear with lack, with disability, with abandonment, with suffering newcomers, orphans and the deserted.

We deal with death all the time. We bear with hard physical labor, plain food and devotion to duty, not unlike soldiers.

We are separated from the world, and it's a choice we all made, to give it up for something better.

Follow

Diversity Village takes up 1.5 by 2 miles, approximately 1,000 acres in the middle hollow between two hills. That is the minimum size that will self-support a community such as we enjoy, just over 200 souls. It is half forest on the high ground half meadows along the creek with shade trees and fruit trees planted, one grassy Center field, and only one large cultivated field because most vegetables and flowers are grown in containers under glass in the greenhouses.

You'll see glass pyramids popping up here and there. The village path is shaped like a clover within the its square boundary. The shape of Village Drive is the template for peoples' movements, and it was imposed on the land as forcefully as any Federalists, Imperialist or industrial manager might have directed.

The town path was bulldozed into its perfect shape, over hills, straight over culverts and streams and eked into hillsides because what the Village wanted was a command of distance and time.

The people knew they would have to take the time to adapt the land, its seasonal water-drainage needs and animals' normal cycles of migration to heal the road's intrusion. But that's okay because we have all the time in the galaxy to DO this.

All cars are parked outside the Village because there is only one road wide enough to support motor traffic. But don't worry; we can skip this bus stop on the parking lot and just walk into the Village to the manager's house on the right and pick up a jitney when it's heading east.

Oh, wait a minute. It's Saturday, isn't it? Well, we'll have to walk, today. When you can see geese on a pond through the trees, you're at the bus stop. Here's the bench.

A jitney will take us everywhere everyday (except Saturday), so cars are not needed nor wanted on the narrow Village trail loops.

We'll be starting out on the east Loop. You wonder how we truck supplies in? We don't need or have to buy "supplies." We live with what we grow and make. Only at Festival times do we truck anything in at all. But today's Saturday, so let's just follow the Jitney's path today around a couple of loops so you can see everything. Just two loops around, and you've seen it all--uh--twice!

Manager's Home

The Managers house is being built to your right, and her front door will face out to the road. Across the street, the Clubhouse is under construction.

Primarily the senior set come here and their primary interest appears to be Bingo; but they invite young friends and great grandkids also. We placed the clubhouse here because it is a disability-friendly building that serves our Visitors also right here at the entrance.

It's important that the public realize who we are and that the first impression should be consistent with reality when visitors first arrive. This is why we have placed the modest apartment of our Manager adjacent to a jitney-stop and at the entrance. This home is 900 square feet (approximately 30 by 30) and sits closest to the highway, visually fairly exposed, its glazed pyramid greenhouse a prominent sign to outsiders.

This is as good as it gets here. There is no home larger or more elaborate than this one. This is our model home, and it is quite modest by ordinary standards.

Willing volunteer Gardeners come in and care for the Manager's greenhouse plants every day, just as the Clubhouse is built and will be cared for and maintained by volunteers also.

When anyone has a question or problem, s/he must ring Mary's doorbell and be admitted. Ringing of the bell can be heard far enough from the house itself that, if s/he is not quite at home, Mary can hurry back from other duties to respond to a Visitor.

Sometimes it may take a while for her to return, but there's always a quiet bench space for sitting down and thinking things over, a cup of coffee at the Clubhouse, or if there's an emergency, one should proceed directly to the red door at the clinic across the street to your left. This is where the Med Unit is already waiting.

Clubhouse

There's a bus stop out front of the Manager's Residence for anyone who needs to come here to complain about something; and of course, the brand new Clubhouse is too, across the street, so Elders get first crack at the Manager's ear.

Also, because it's important that those of us who are sober and careful can preserve our home from sodden drunkenness and/or people flipped out on drugs, we have rigorous methods for dealing with these problems that sequester offenders out of sight.

Since we don't tell each other what we can or cannot do, anybody that goes on a spree is simply led, directed or carried to a hut down on our southern flank until they return to their senses. No muss, no fuss, no argument.

When they sober up, they find themselves infested with fleas, mosquitoes, ants, poison ivy and black snakes. That generally prevents a recurrence.

After dark until 2am this area is patrolled by high school Elders from Voc Tech Institute--the High School--who have mastered martial arts and have qualified in tandem-animal training to become certificated for guard duty.

Their job is to promenade (walk) the dog-pig team around their neighborhood every so often and notice who's present. We don't want to run into a team at night. They deliver anyone they find in an inebriated state down to an empty hut on the southern flank. Believe me, no harm comes to them, just some discomfort. A dog-pig-goose team can make a lot of noise and ruckus if they don't recognize you.

Between 2am and dawn adult maintenance men and cleaning crews alternate patrols with regular duties. Since we are not an armed community, we must all be vigilant to notice and report strangers and intruders so their needs can be responded to promptly and appropriately -- usually a drink of water, food or first aid -- or a hut shelter--is all they're looking for or need.

In this immediate area we're going to see the Clinic with the Red Door to your left.

Medical Facilities and Staff

The Clinic

From here you can see a red door of the Clinic, with RED-painted door for visibility from the path. It contains an examination room, testing lab, all-purpose Emergency Room with four beds and working area for dispatchers who work 24/7 in four-to-five-hour shifts. That means a total of 16 people work 63 full-time regular shifts to respond to emergencies. All trained as EMTs, their job is to triage--determine the severity of the problem--and call in medical staff or simply alleviate the problem themselves.

All first aid is a response to effects. Equipment and supplies are maintained to handle injury as well as problems of communicable and infectious "disease." There is place for everything and everything must be kept in its place. However, we do not expect stoicism; pain and suffering are met with kindness, not paperwork. A person in stress is offered hot tea and time to calm down. They can talk it out, cry it out, or even cry and holler it out, and that's okay.

Incoming calls are screened for priority and relayed immediately, and there is no paperwork because there is no insurance company to deal with. (Anybody who sues us because we didn't do all the paperwork will find that