

# Creative with Conflict workshops offers new perspective on resolution

In response to rising tension, both locally and globally, CCDI Creative will offer one day Creative with Conflict workshops on 23 March, 18 May and 15 June 2017.

Dammon Rice, head of CCDI Creative, a local consultancy offering creative workshops to unlock competitiveness says, “Although we might try to, we cannot avoid conflict, it rears its head in all areas of our lives. It enters our political spaces, our homes, schools, workplaces, and our social lives.



Dammon Rice

“It is how we manage these conflicts that can either propel us into a phase of growth, deeper understanding and better, more constructive relationships or plummet us into dysfunction, stagnation and resentment.”

Professor Tatsushi Arai, a professor of conflict transformation at SIT Graduate Institute, scholar and practitioner in conflict resolution, multi-track diplomacy, sustainable development and cross-cultural communication, argues, “As long as there are contradictions in social interactions, those contradictions stand in the way of our human fulfilment.”

“Overcoming seemingly incompatible goals requires shifting the parameters of the conflict, redefining the goals and coming up with different principles by which to see the challenge.”

## Creativity for conflict resolution

Arai also taught international relations at the National University of Rwanda and worked in development in Rwanda in the aftermath of its 1994 genocide. He is the author of *Creativity and Conflict Resolution: Alternative Pathways to Peace* and is an advocate of creative approaches to conflict.

“I see creativity for conflict transformation as a sustained, interactive and group-based process where a small number of stakeholders involved in a given social conflict come up with a seemingly unconventional insight to respond to the root causes of that conflict. Importantly, the insight has to be subsequently accepted as workable by a growing number of other stakeholders,” he says.

Rice says that for many of us creativity is something that is done by others – the ‘creatives’ amongst us – so we avoid or dismiss it and designate it to someone else; and so we become stagnant and rigid in our thinking and doing.

“By doing that, we lose the opportunity to engage with the incompatible goals and allow new possibilities to emerge, because we do not think of ourselves as creative. When we embrace creativity, push through the discomfort of not knowing, into a space of curiosity, we have the opportunity to find a new path. We grow, build deeper connections and more constructive solutions.

“This is true in all spheres including within our organisations. Organisations are made up of individuals with different skills sets, talents, life experiences, prejudices and personalities. All of these constitute the basis of inter-personal and group dynamics and provide ample opportunity for misunderstanding, miscommunication, contentious disagreement and conflict,” comments Rice.

## Inclusive methods for solving conflict

Naëtt Atkinson is an internationally accredited mediator, and specialises in mediation, conflict resolution and mentoring in various contexts. She runs the Creative with Conflict workshops with Rice. “The challenge is that traditional ways of addressing these issues are often ineffective. Conflicts are sometimes solved in an autocratic way; the symptoms of the conflict are dealt with, but not the underlying causes, so resentment or underlying issues remain; the process for dealing with conflict in organisations is not clear. People just leave their positions or they escalate the matters to the legal system, because they do not believe that the conflict will be resolved and do not want to expend energy on trying.

“What we need is an overhaul of the current approach to dealing with conflict, so that it is more inclusive; a much greater focus on self-awareness as a process to help with conflict resolution; and tools for alternative ways to resolve conflict that lead to more creative solutions and sustained positive relationships.

“Creativity and conflict are not mutually exclusive. Both can be difficult and uncomfortable to grapple with, but through engaging with creative thinking while dealing with conflict, we have an opportunity to provide opportunities for deeper understanding, stronger relationships, growth and change.”

“Moreover, it is good for the bottom line. An investment in creativity and design is simply good business,” says Mala Sharma, VP and GM of Creative Cloud at Adobe which conducts an annual study of creativity in business globally.

“Creativity and productivity go hand in hand but investing in creativity is not on the agenda for enough of today’s leaders.”

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