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crescendo
SUMMER
INSTITUTE

SMALL GROUP MANUAL

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

Introduction

“Be embraced, millions!” – with these well-known words by Friedrich Schiller ends Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. The dream of reconciliation is one of the greatest of mankind. In classical drama there is one main line of story: from conflict to (at least attempted) resolution. Many classical operas and even more operettas(!) conclude with the happy end of reconciliation. A great number of tragic subjects were transformed and furnished with a good ending, such as “Orpheus and Eurydice” by Gluck. “Don Giovanni”, on the other hand, seems an exception.

Obviously, this issue is so interesting for opera and drama because we are regularly confronted with corresponding questions in our everyday life. Or, to put it in other words: our life consists to a rather large extent of conflicts in need of resolution. Naturally, this relates to the artist’s life as well. As we know only too well: unresolved conflicts consume much energy, time and, occasionally, even money. And an artist is often hampered in his creative work. Conflict may even paralyse our whole life!

During these days we would like to reflect on conflicts and possible ways of reconciliation – and also on how we can conduct ourselves in situations of unresolved conflict, always keeping in mind the artist’s life in particular. Our booklet offers you food for thought on the foundation of Christian theology and statements from the Bible. It is, however, self-evident that views of other religions or philosophes may included and discussed just as well!

The following tuitional material is suitable for groupwork. You may also take it home after the “Crescendo Summer Institute” and launch a Crescendo_group with it. We will be very happy to advise you further! Please contact us: info@crescendo.org

We wish you much pleasure in resolving conflicts!

Airi and Beat Rink
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Please read the introduction on page 1



Let us start with a question: Where have you experienced reconciliation up till now?

- Can you tell us about an experience of reconciliation?
- What steps are needed in order to achieve reconciliation?

Steps to Reconciliation

Step 1: Control Your First Reaction

The concertmaster of an orchestra recounts: "I've been working in a symphony orchestra for some months only. But already, I feel most uncomfortable, because my colleagues are always grimacing and hissing 'tsts...' behind me at the tiniest mistake of mine. It is very probable I will soon leave this position." Meanwhile, the young concertmaster has indeed submitted her letter of resignation. Reconciliation, after all, has not happened.

There are several possible reactions. Depending on our character we react differently when treated unjustly: with wrath, self-doubts, faint-heartedness, depression, counter-attack, etc.

How do you react to bullying and aggression?

Jesus says: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

(Gospel of Matthew 5,38-42)

How can we understand this? Does this mean not to allow ourselves to have feelings of aggression? Are we supposed to always give way – or not?

For further discussion:

- Read from the Epistle to the Romans verses 12,9-21 and exchange thoughts with each other.
- To what extent was this strategy, if implemented consistently, successful?
- The strategy is apt to be misunderstood. How?
- How do we understand the text in the context of the message of the Bible? Compare:
 - a) Song of the Sword, Genesis 4,23-24
 - b) “An eye for an eye”, Exodus 21/22 (here, we have the so-called “law of retaliation”, postulating compensation and not just “revenge”, as e.g. the Islamic Shariah. Furthermore, in chapter 21 it is important that also the poor and weak are defended!)
 - c) Book of Isaiah 50, 6 !
 - c) Gospel of Matthew 5, 38-42

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Step 2: Be Honest!

It is important to be honest. This means we should provide ourselves with an outlet for our bad feelings instead of bottling them up or ignoring them. This “outlet”, however, should not be some unreflected retaliation. Admittedly, it may sometimes be appropriate to confront the one who wronged us, but possibly only at some future time.

In the book of Psalms in the Bible, there are numerous “Psalms of lamentation”. Therein, people turn to God to pour their heart out to him. E.g. in Psalm 22:

“All who see me mock me;

they hurl insults, shaking their heads (v.7)

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me,

They have pierced my hands and my feet. (16)

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. (18)”

Are you able to express your feelings honestly? Are you able to lament and pour your heart out? If so, to whom?



Art and music are also capable of lamentation – thus they lend their voice to the mute – as did German artist Kathe Kollwitz (1876 – 1945) or Pablo Picasso with his painting “Guernica” It was created in 1937 in commemoration of the Basque Town Guernica, which was destroyed by the German Luftwaffe during Spanish Civil War.

Can you think of some more examples?



The Psalms illustrate the fact that we expect justice from God. We can turn to God with our lamentation and may anticipate his help.

*“But you, O LORD, be not far off,
O my Strength, come quickly to help me. (v.19)“*

This means that lamentation leads us to prayer? Have you ever experienced that this helps?

What significance does “lamentation” have – in the Bible and in our lives
Compare Job 3, and the prayer of Jesus on the Cross.
How important is it that we can lament?

Step 3: Try to Understand the Other

**Please, reread the example in chapter 1.
What might be behind this “mobbing”?**

It is good to be capable of seeing “behind” a conflict. This means if we are able to understand: the other person does not necessarily have anything against me as a person. He has got another motive. We can also try to put ourselves in the position of the other – to look with his eyes, to hear with his ears, to feel with his heart. Thus we might realise that:

- I myself have also made a mistake!
- Sometimes, silly misunderstandings happen.
- The other does not even realise what he actually did and what this has done to me.
- I should not generalise thus and think the other means ill.

Have you had this before – a conflict is eased because you understand the other one better?

3

Envy

Edvard Munch: Jealousy



It is a fact that the concertmaster was mobbed by those who originally had wanted her position for themselves. Envy is a major negative factor in relations! It stands at the beginning of many conflicts.

**Where does envy begin? What is behind it?
(Maybe this can help us understand one another and resolve the conflict?)**

Do you know any story about envy, either from your own experience or from politics/history or from art (literature, opera, theatre, film)?

From the Bible we know some examples of envy:

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4): *Even the very first pair of brothers already knew envy! Cain slew his brother Abel from envy.*

Joseph and his brothers: (Genesis 37-50) *Joseph, the youngest son (but one), is favoured by his father Jacob. He receives even a lovely colourful gown. His eleven brothers are jealous. They want to kill him, decide, however, to just throw him into a well. Later they even allow him to be abducted to Egypt.*

But the story goes on: In Egypt, Joseph climbs the social ladder. Eventually he, as Pharaoh's right-hand man, holds control over all the country's grain. When famine strikes Canaan, his brothers come to Egypt to beg for help. Joseph recognises them, but they do not...Has the time of revenge now come? Or does Joseph understand his brothers?



Friedrich Overbeck: The Selling of Joseph to the Egyptians, 1816/17

What personal conflicts do you have (in your family, with friends, in your everyday life as a musician and artist, ...)?

But also conflicts between your nation and others or between different social groups...Think about it and try to understand the other party.

Step 4: Confront the Other with the Truth

Thus, the story of Joseph goes on: For the time being, Joseph manages to conceal his identity from his brothers. After some thought, he, however, decides not to take revenge but to reveal himself to them. Nevertheless, he wants his favourite brother, Benjamin, to come also. But he has stayed at home with their old father. Finally, when Benjamin has arrived in Egypt, Joseph discloses his identity and says: "Come close to me! When they have done so, he says, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt" (Genesis 45, 4)

By revealing himself, Joseph confronts his brothers with their guilt.

Peter von Cornelius (1816): Joseph makes himself known to his Brothers



How can we confront the other with the truth?

4 Steps

1. Name your **own fault** (if there is one!) and ask for forgiveness!
2. **Express** the mistake of the other clearly
 - a. Remind him of the "contract" or the "rules"
 - b. Disclose misunderstandings
 - c. Speak about your situation as someone who has been treated unjustly
 - d. Word your expectations
3. Identify the consequences of guilt
4. **Ask questions** such as: "Why did you act like that?"

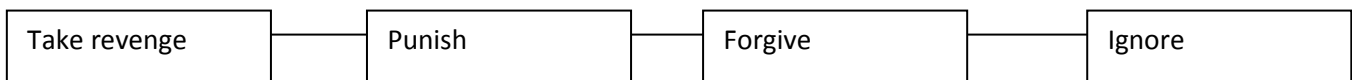
Which of this steps have you had experience with?

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Step 5: Punish or Forgive

Must I Punish?

Punishing and forgiving – both are steps we know from society and from our personal lives. In children’s upbringing or justice, punishment is an important issue.



**Often, we punish others or even take revenge.
How do we do this?**

When is punishment appropriate?

Can I forgive?

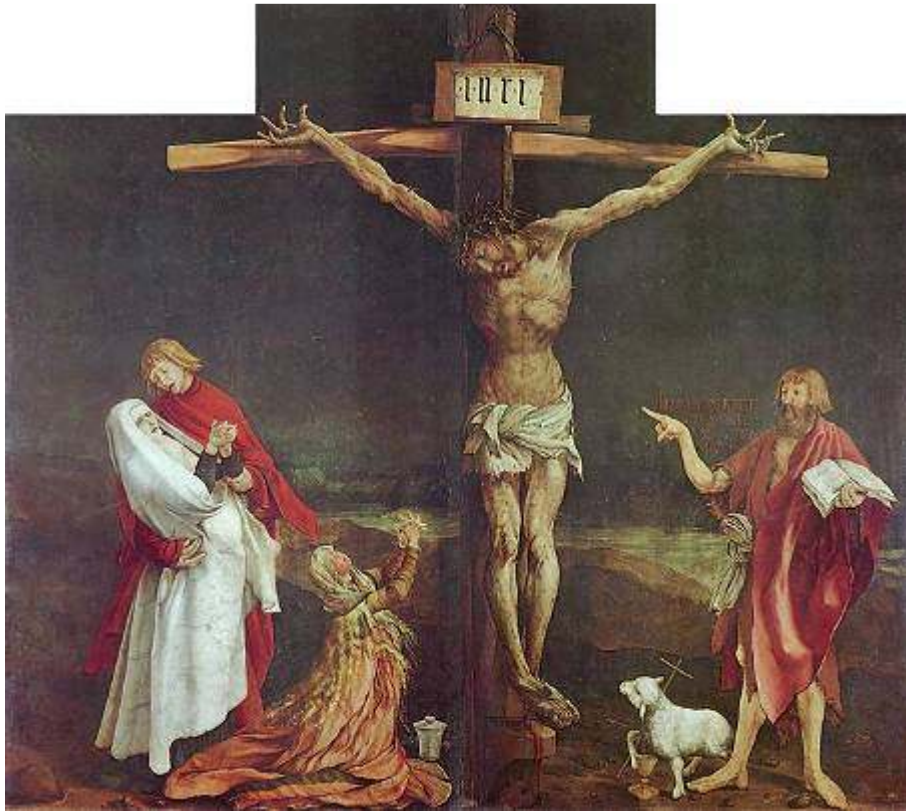
Alternatively, we can decide to forgive.

Joseph says to his brothers: “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” (Genesis 45,5ff.)

The most important message of the Bible is: God forgives us readily, if we ask him for it. Therefore we also can forgive others!

In Psalm 103 it says: “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. (2+3)... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (12).

From Masses by the great composers we know that Jesus is addressed as „Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi“ = “You, Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world”



The famous Isenheim Altarpiece by **Matthias Grünewald** (1475/1480-1528) shows the crucifixion of Jesus in the centre. To the right there is John the Baptist with the lamb (Agnus Dei).

Christian belief – at one glance

In the centre of Christian belief stands the person of Jesus Christ. Due to our guilt we are separated from God and eternal life. Paulus writes: “The consequence of sin is eternal death”. Why did God send Jesus to this world? “For God so

loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3,16). After a short period of public activity (teaching, healing, doing miracles), Jesus was executed. He had pre-announced his death as well as his resurrection. His rising, having been witnessed by many people, was “proof” of the fact that he was the Son of God. The death of the Son of God on the cross was an act of forgiveness. The innocent took upon himself the punishment we deserve ourselves.

“All are sinners before God and are pronounced righteous without deserving it, because God is gracious and because Jesus Christ has redeemed us” (after the Epistle to the Romans 3, 23). That is why 1 John 1,9 says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

According to the Bible, believing means to say “yes” to forgiveness and to accept Jesus Christ as our saviour. We can put this into a prayer.

Why is this so important for our topic?

In the prayer “Our Father” Jesus says: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (= those having become guilty in relation to us)

We can forgive because we ourselves are offered forgiveness by God.



Corrie ten Boom's (1892-1983) moving story on forgiving:

"It was in a church in Munich that I saw him—a balding, heavysset man in a grey overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands. People were filing out of the basement room where I had just spoken, moving along the rows of wooden chairs to the door at the rear. It was 1947 and I had come from Holland to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives.

"It was the truth they needed most to hear in that bitter, bombed-out land, and I gave them my favourite mental picture. Maybe because the sea is never far from a Hollander's mind, I liked to think that that's where forgiven sins were thrown. 'When we confess our sins,' I said, 'God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever. ...'

"The solemn faces stared back at me, not quite daring to believe. There were never questions after a talk in Germany in 1947. People stood up in silence, in silence collected their wraps, in silence left the room.

"And that's when I saw him, working his way forward against the others. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat; the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones. It came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights; the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the centre of the floor; the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin. Betsie, how thin you were!

[Betsie and I had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland; this man had been a guard at Ravensbruck concentration camp where we were sent.]

"Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: 'A fine message, Fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!'

"And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course—how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women?

"But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face-to-face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze.

" 'You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,' he was saying, 'I was a guard there.' No, he did not remember me.

" 'But since that time,' he went on, 'I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fräulein,' again the hand came out—'will you forgive me?'

"And I stood there—I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven—and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

"It could not have been many seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

“For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. ‘If you do not forgive men their trespasses,’ Jesus says, ‘neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.’

“I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

“And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. ‘... Help!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’

“And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

“ ‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart!’

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then”

(excerpted from “I’m Still Learning to Forgive” by Corrie ten Boom. Reprinted by permission from Guideposts Magazine. Copyright © 1972 by Guideposts Associates, Inc., Carmel, New York 10512>).

What experiences have you had with reconciliation?

Can you comprehend the central message of Christian faith (“God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ”)? What does it mean to you?

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Step 6: Reconciliation – Finding a Solution

Depending on the kind of conflict a resolution must be found for the future. In the case of the concert master who feels mobbed by her begrudging colleagues, it is important to observe steps 1-5. Therefore let us recapitulate:

Step 1: control your reaction

Step 2: be honest!

Step 3: try to understand the other

Step 4: confront the other with the truth

Step 5: punish or forgive

After having taken the last step, there is one important thing left: forgiving does not mean the problem is solved. However, we are now able to approach the issue differently.

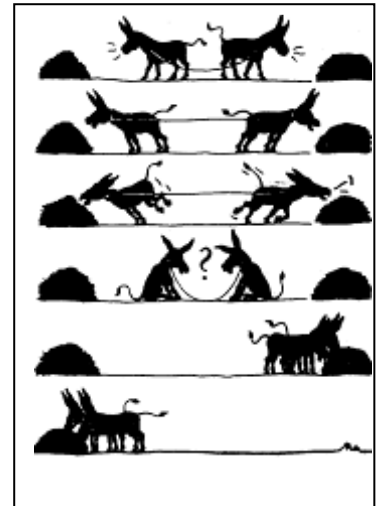
What would step 6 be in a case concerning you (or somebody from your group) personally? Or in the case of the mobbed concertmaster? Please see different possibilities of conflict resolution below.

Rembrandt, The Prodigal Son (1668/ 69)



Research on conflicts has identified the following possibilities of ending a conflict:

- **A) Flight:** the problem is suspended (lose-lose)
- **B) Subjugation:** the stronger one wins (win-lose)
- **C) Delegation:** the decision on the conflict is assigned to a third party (resolution open)
- **D) Compromise:** a partial settlement. “A compromise is good only when both parties are discontent with it...” (win/lose – win/lose)
- **E) Consensus:** a good solution is found, both parties agree to it (win-win) – see illustration.



We add:

- **F) New Beginning through Forgiveness:** the stronger / innocent one forgives (relinquishes his rights voluntarily) and gives the other a chance to start afresh (lose-win – or win-win, too?)

Reconciliation means: One celebrates peace!

“The Prodigal Son” from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, is one of the most impressive stories Jesus tells. It is a parable – the classical didactic narrative of ancient Orient.

What is it about? Somebody in your group will surely be able to tell the story briefly.

What solution does the son propose?

What solution does the father offer?

What does the other son want?

Could the father’s attitude serve as a model for our way of solving problems?

New Beginning through Forgiveness

Let us once again turn to conflict resolution (F).

X loses on purpose, in order to enable Y to start afresh. X is the “saviour”.

Occidental literature, theatre and cinematic art knows this scheme very well – e.g. the movie “Gran Torino” by Clint Eastwood



Why?

Is this win-loose-ending a win-win-resolution after all?

- Further food for thought: 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, 5,20f.
- What does the word “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.” (Gospel of Luke, 9,24) mean to us? How do we implement them in our lives?

Competition – Without Envy?

What would be the 6th step if envy rules the atmosphere and poisons the working climate?

Let us recall: “competition” comes from the Latin words “cum” (“with, together”) and “petere” (“to seek, to strive after”): Accordingly, let us strive with, not against one another for success!

You might suggest speaking about it in class, in the orchestra, opera etc.

- You could propose a change of mind:
 - to respect one another
 - to encourage one another
 - to praise one another
 - to criticise one another in a friendly way and without aggression
- You could compose some kind of declaration and sign it together (see below)

Could you identify yourself with the Artist’s Declaration below?

Please discuss it and take down alternative suggestions (for the attention of the group leader) or send them to info@crescendo.org . We hope it will soon be signed by thousands of artists around the world!

Artist's Declaration

1

It is with concern that we see competition among colleagues e.g. in educational institutions (music colleges, dance, theatre or art academies) as well as in theatres, orchestras or opera houses increasing fast. Cooperation as colleagues and fruitful collaboration as artists is significantly marred as a result. Competition in terms of "com-petition" (= striving for success together) is good. Often, however, it degenerates into jealous rivalry.

We endeavour to oppose this development by

- not primarily regarding one another as competitors
- encouraging one another
- inspiring one another to serve art together
- giving respectful feedback to one another

2

We often experience the working atmosphere in musical education as cold and marked by the pressure of artistic perfection. We want to take countermeasures against this. As students and teachers we wish to contribute to a wholesome studying atmosphere that is free of abuse of power, manipulation, and egocentric self-display.

3

We wish to stand up against any tendency towards (self-)worship of artists. We disapprove of an art and music market orientated solely on profit along with its inhuman mechanisms because it is not in keeping with art and its Creator.

Signed by : _____ E-m@il: _____

6

Reconciliation With the Past

Our past has a stronger influence on us than we think. We cannot change what we have seen or done.

A good and harmonious childhood gives you a stable basis for life. You can be thankful for experiencing that. But all negative, burdening experiences shape our whole life, too. Perhaps we have become guilty ourselves and have done something we regret today.

Admittedly, we cannot reverse events. But we can digest our memories and reconcile ourselves with the past.

This possibly relates to experiences with family members, teachers or friends.

Reconciliation with the past – how can it be achieved?

5 steps:

1. **Identify** and **name injuries**. **Write** down all **burdening experiences** and/or **speak** about them with someone. Everything brought to light is not so threatening anymore.
2. **Ask for forgiveness**, if you have done something wrong.
3. **Forgive!** Even if it is emotionally very difficult. You can even forgive if the other party is not present or does not regret anything. In this case, you are active and may regain your inner peace by this act of forgiveness.
4. **Pray** so God may “heal” bad memories and injuries.
5. Depending on circumstances **seek to talk** with the person who injured you.

Do you realise that your past influences you: positively/negatively?

(Questions to discuss or for personal reflection)

Have you ever experienced “reconciliation with the past”?

In what areas would it be important for you to experience it yet?

Which of the five steps could become important next?

Reconciliation with Oneself

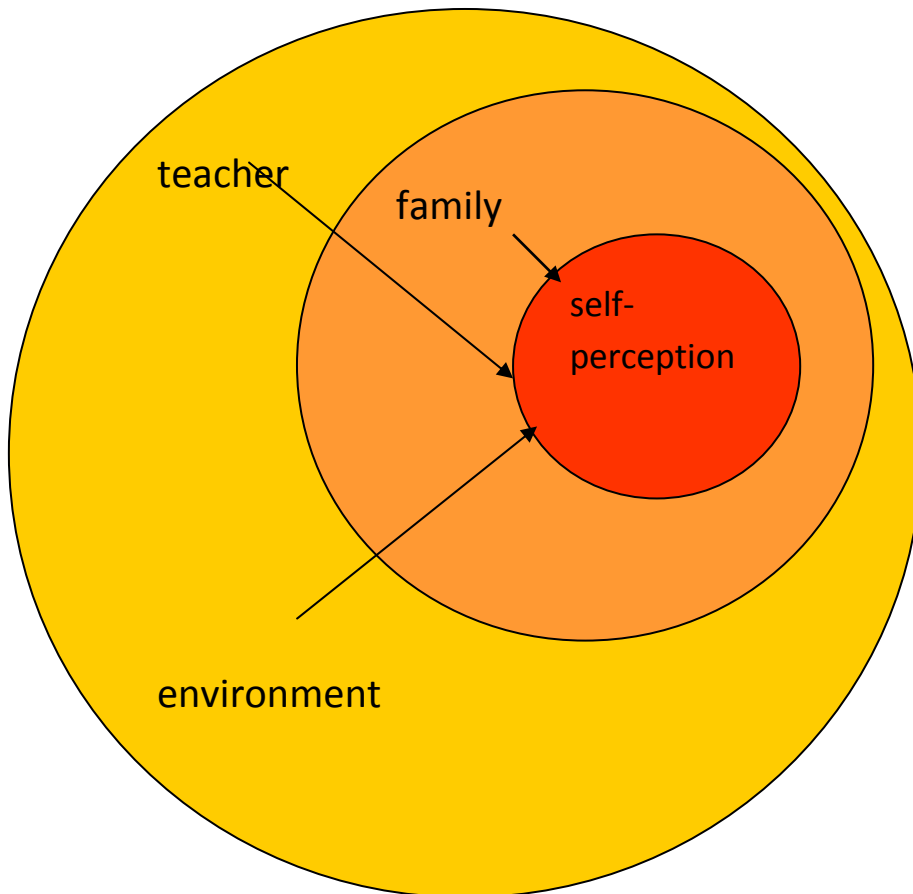
The image we have of ourselves determines our whole personality and behaviour. Thus, the way we see ourselves affects our whole life.

Our self-perception is also crucially influences to our ability to develop sound, positive relationships with other people. If we cannot accept ourselves, if we “are at war” with ourselves, we lose much energy.

What is “self-perception“?

Insights from psychology might be thus simplified: self-perception is imbued by various factors:

1. What others say about me, what feedback I receive, e.g. from my own family
2. Thoughts I have about myself
3. Comparison with others
4. What God thinks about me



**What comes spontaneously to your mind when you look at this picture?
 What influences your self-perception most?**

The illustration shows: **Pressure from without is enormous.**

Our environment communicates its **ideals** and tells us what we are supposed to be:

- models and muscle-men
- attractive
- something between highly talented and ingenious
- socially aware
- quick-witted
- having a large circle of friends
- successful
- rich

Influenced by our environment we have drawn an image of ourselves and accordingly develop expectations we



of

cannot fulfil (see illustration above: the cat sees a lion in the mirror). Thus, pressure increases.

Frequently, however, we feel completely different:

- unpopular
- ignored
- ungifted
- not attractive enough
- a loser
- or just “normal”!

Often, we pass a crushing judgement on ourselves. At such moments, we find it difficult even to accept our strong features (the lion sees a cat in the mirror...!). This leads to:

- uncertainty
- self-contempt
- self-hatred
- stress (we want to be different but are not capable of doing so)

Reconciled with your calling as a musician/artist?

X says: “I feel called to be a musician. I’ve always loved to play the piano. In my family, I was certainly an outsider. My parents always wanted me to study something else. But I succeeded in getting my way. Now, at music college, I am gradually losing pleasure in music. Pressure, bad feedback – it is all too much! By now I am “at war” with my calling and my piano...What shall I do?”

Question for personal reflection:

Can you say “yes” to yourself? Are you reconciled with yourself and your self-perception?

If not, why not?

What would you like to be different?

Does the story of the music student ring a bell?

When and where do I see myself as a lion instead of a cat?

When and where do I see myself as a cat instead of a lion?

7

Would you like to tell the others what has become important to you since the last group session? When do you see yourself as a cat, when as a lion?

5 steps to reconciliation with yourself

1. I perceive my **uniqueness** as a human being and am capable of taking a wholesome **distance to all ideals influencing me negatively**.
2. I want to become “**myself**” and not to copy others. Naturally, I have got paragons and can learn many things from them. Nevertheless I am still **authentic**.

Are these steps difficult/easy for you?
What could help you with it?

My idols?



3. I can admit **my limitations and imperfections**. My self-perception, however, does not deteriorate.
4. I need **feedback** from others and I consider them, be they good or bad. But I am not wholly dependent on them, but develop my own view of myself.

What does negative feedback effect? Does it corrupt your self-perception?
To what extent are you dependent on the opinion of others?

5. **Self-esteem:** I regard myself as valuable, because **God sees my worth** and I am accepted and beloved by him..

Unfortunately, we tend to have notions of God which do not correspond to what is said in the Bible. And that is exactly why we sometimes get the idea he harbours bad thoughts about us.

What idea of God do you have?

Let us read:

Some verses from Psalm 139:

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

You hem me in – behind and before; you have laid your hand on me.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Or from the book of the prophet Jeremiah, 29, 10-14

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declare the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future... You will seek me and find me when you seek me with your whole heart.”

What are the implications if our self-perception is founded on such words?

