



Cooperative Wisdom: Bringing People Together When Things Fall Apart

Donald Scherer PhD, Carolyn Jabs M.A.

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Why, despite their best efforts, do good people find themselves in conflict? *Cooperative Wisdom: Bringing People Together When Things Fall Apart* introduces a novel approach to ethics that consistently dissolves conflict, restores goodwill, builds common purpose, and helps people thrive. Developed from years of scholarship and proven practice, this insightful approach to conflict resolution is effective in boardrooms and family rooms, classrooms and committees, faith communities and government agencies.

Rooted in rigorous ethical thinking, *Cooperative Wisdom* is highly readable. Written as a spirited exchange between an acclaimed philosopher and an inquisitive journalist, it has the energetic, inviting feel of a great conversation. Dr. Donald Scherer sets forth the human virtues that promote sustainability in natural and social environments. Award-winning journalist Carolyn Jabs asks the tough and pointed questions a smart reader would raise. Their collaboration distills a lifetime of research and analysis into practical principles that crack open stubborn problems and reveal cooperative solutions to persistent conflicts.

Cooperative Wisdom starts with the observation that human beings flourish in settings where cooperation produces mutual benefits. That's why people put so much effort into creating strong marriages, resilient families, robust associations, responsible companies, progressive communities, and effective governments. When change threatens these systems—as it inevitably does—cooperators find themselves in conflict even though they sincerely tried to do the right thing.

The authors then introduce readers to five social virtues: habits of thought and action that sustain cooperation despite change and conflict.

1. *Proactive compassion* anticipates and responds to vulnerability.
2. *Deep discernment* uncovers bedrock values.
3. *Intentional imagination* expands our sense of what's possible.
4. *Inclusive integrity* reworks cooperative structures so everyone can thrive.
5. *Creative courage* embraces the risks of engagement.

For each virtue, the book recommends three practical strategies that will help readers learn how to apply the virtues in their own lives. Readers gain insight into how these practices work through examples drawn from history, current events, family life, and even scripture.

During his long and distinguished career as an environmental ethicist, Dr. Scherer has witnessed the power of these social virtues and practices. Both he and students he has trained have shown them to be effective in a wide range of personal, social, political, and environmental settings—from beta testing electric vehicles to securing the safety of donated blood supplies, from restoring a degraded ecosystem in Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley to helping parents find safe online environments for kids.

Cooperative Wisdom will appeal to anyone frustrated by disruptive change and apparently intractable disputes. The social virtues it describes open up promising paths where there seem to be nothing but dead ends. Providing clear, practical guidance that expands our understanding of what it means to be and do good

in a complex world, this book equips readers to respond constructively to change, transcend conflict, and strengthen the communities on which our well-being depends.

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