



A Day of Storytelling with Kenneth Cloke and John Sturrock

Friday 29 September

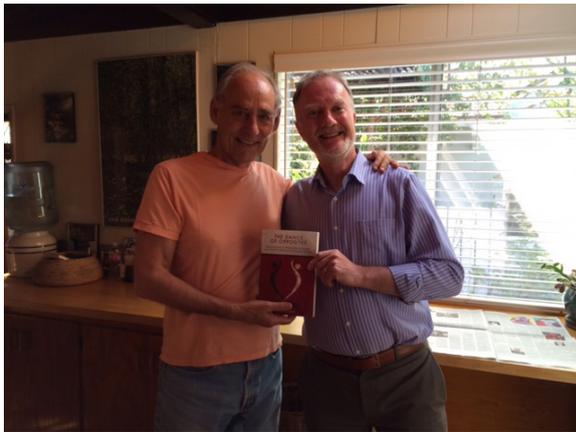
The Storytelling Centre, Royal Mile, Edinburgh

About the event

Ken Cloke, one of the leading writers and thinkers in the field of conflict, will join with Core's founder and senior mediator, **John Sturrock**, for a day of reflections on conflict, why it happens and how we can manage it.

They will look at all kinds of disputes and differences, from commercial to political, from family to religion, from local to international. Among these topics, John and Ken will be discussing dialogue in politics, the importance of civil public discourse, neuroscience and bias, managing difficult situations in large and small organisations and key skills to use in negotiation and mediation.

They will draw on experiences and examples from a rich catalogue. And all in the appropriate setting of the Storytelling Centre in the heart of Edinburgh's old town.



Date: Friday, 29 September 2017

Time: Networking breakfast from 9am (event will start formally at 9.45am and conclude at 3.30pm with a glass of wine)

Venue: Scottish Storytelling Centre, 43-45 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1SR

CPD: 5 hours

Register [here](#)

Our Morning Topics:

- Why is Conflict Such a Normal Part of our Lives?
- How can we Reduce Hostility in Political Conflicts? An Algorithm for Dialogue?

Our Afternoon Topics:

- Specific Areas of Conflict in our Work and Lives: Families, Workplace and Organisations, Religion
- Understanding Priming, Cognitive Biases and Cognitive Ease in Conflict and Negotiation
- Solving the Big Global Problems?

Our Morning Topics

Why is Conflict Such a Normal Part of our Lives?

We experience conflicts because everyone is different, every person is different from one moment to the next, and our needs and interests often clash. At the same time, we are also similar to each other and some part of us is the same from birth to death. So these basic facts create the possibility of both conflict and resolution. Mostly, conflicts represent the presence of two truths: perhaps two inner truths we are torn between, or two social truths that represent different goals or possible futures. All growth and change creates conflict; yet it's not conflict that produces most of our problems, but the way we respond to it and how we think, feel and act in its presence.

As **Albert Einstein** famously declared after atom bombs were detonated over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *"Everything has changed, except the way we think."*

How can we Reduce Hostility in Political Conflicts? An Algorithm for Dialogue?

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies." **Groucho Marx**

If we consider the nature of political conflicts over long stretches of time and without regard to their specific content, we can see that they can be greatly simplified, revealing their constituent parts and enabling us to develop more effective approaches to resolving the important issues that lie beneath their surface. Doing so suggests ways we can shift political communications in constructive directions and capture their deeper significance.

What makes an issue political is therefore the presence of a disagreement over choices, direction or values, which can, in a variety of ways, mutate into conflict.

The problem is not that we disagree about political choices, directions, or values, but how we disagree. Political disagreement is an essential attribute of diversity and citizenship, and an important element in successful social problem solving. But personal hostility, hatred and enmity move us beyond disagreement, turning it into conflict, which diminishes our ability to accurately evaluate complex choices, decide on the best direction, and uphold our values.

Process and relationships are just as important as content and substance. To move from power-based political conflicts to interest-based disagreements requires us to recognize the higher value of Aristotle's search for the greatest common good, and of the interest-based processes and collaborative relationships that encourage us to do the difficult work needed to achieve it.

In doing so, we need to surrender the idea that there is a single political truth, which is ours, and recognize instead that every political argument is an effort to establish the truth and validity, value and importance, of someone's special subjective social or political experience. This implies that politics, despite its linguistic assumptions and orientation to power or rights, need not be a zero-sum game in which one side is right and all others are wrong, but an effort to acknowledge, investigate and integrate multiple, diverse, contradictory truths, in the course of formulating a common policy and direction over a protracted period of time in which interests are various and consequences are unclear.

Political communications should therefore be regarded as unscientific and inexact, leading to an acceptance of different, co-existing, alternative truths representing unique personal and group experiences each of which is valid — in other words, we should view political statements not as win/lose, true or false propositions, but as indicators of experience and perception, stories of pain and injustice, declarations of disagreements or desires, appeals for support and requests for improvement, none of which are mutually exclusive. No political argument powerful enough to convince large numbers of people could be entirely wrong. Thus, every powerful political idea represents, and continues to represent, some important piece of political truth, based on some genuine social and historically bounded experience.

Our Morning Topics (continued)

This is precisely what conflict resolution at its core represents: a way of resolving disputes based on diverse interests using consensus building, power-balancing, option generating, joint problem-solving, prioritizing and similar techniques in which no single group is allowed to dominate. Mediation thus possesses a hidden political aspect that is inherently democratic, egalitarian and collaborative because it allows a variety of interests and truths to contend and seek synergistic combination. It defeats prejudice and hatred not with opposing prejudices and hatreds, but by reframing them as requests; in other words, combining, integrating and synthesizing them, then searching beneath their hostile veneer for the hidden, unsatisfied, heartfelt experiences and interests that fuel them and allow them to be combined in new, synergistically creative ways.

Our Afternoon Topics

Specific Areas of Conflict in our Work and Lives: Families, Workplace and Organisations, Religion

The most difficult issues we face in life, whether as couples, families, organizations, societies, or nation-states, cannot be resolved by individuals acting alone, elites acting autocratically, or factions acting in their own distinct self-interest. They can only be resolved by coming together across our differences, listening and talking to each other, exploring our disagreements, working collaboratively, reaching consensus, deciding what to do democratically, and acting jointly in the interest of the whole.

Yet working together with those who are different, those we dislike, those whose actions we find repellent, those with whom we disagree, requires higher order listening, dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills, as well as more time, and greater effort than acting alone. It can be exhausting, irksome, messy and galling to listen closely and come to terms with opinions and interests that diverge sharply from our own, so in many cases we chose to act alone, both as individuals and as nation states.

Understanding Priming, Cognitive Biases and Cognitive Ease in Conflict and Negotiation

“What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? This is the most important of all voyages of discovery, and without it, all the rest are not only useless, but disastrous.” **Thomas Merton**

We now understand so much more about how our brains work. Framing, wilful blindness, confirmation bias, systems 1 and 2, anchoring, loss aversion, reactive devaluation, zero sum heuristics and so on. But how can these be thoughtfully used and applied in day to day negotiation and mediation?

Solving the Big Global Problems?

“If the future of mankind is not to be jeopardised by conflicting spheres of civilization and culture, we have no alternative but to shift the ray of our attention from that which separates us to that which unites us. Mine is a vision of ... a united people, belonging to a world in jeopardy which can be saved only by uniting all human forces.” **Vaclav Havel**

We are facing an increasing number of complex global problems and conflicts, each of which requires us to move beyond the national borders we created over centuries in order to solve them.

About Our Storytellers

Kenneth Cloke

Kenneth Cloke has written 10 books on conflict resolution and mediation. He is recognised as a pioneer and leader in the field and one of its deepest thinkers. He works with the Center for Dispute Resolution in Santa Monica, California, and the globally based Mediators Beyond Borders.

Ken Cloke earned his JD from Berkeley, a Ph.D. and a master of laws from UCLA, has done post-doctoral work at Yale and is a graduate of the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada. He has served as an administrative law judge, and is an adjunct professor of law at Pepperdine University's School of Law, Strauss Institute; Southern Methodist University; Saybrook University and the University of Southern California.

Ken has applied that substantial resume to conflict resolution work in more than 20 countries, including Greece, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, India, Pakistan, Cuba, Brazil, Ireland and the former USSR. His specialty is in resolving complex, multi-party conflicts. Some of these have involved major disputes: between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians and Russians, Muslims and Hindus, Palestinians and Israelis. Others have taken place inside or between Fortune 500 companies, governments, political organisations, universities, school districts, labor and management. Many others have involved mediating personal disputes between spouses, family members, parents and children.

Read an Interview with Ken [here](#).

John Sturrock QC

Since leaving active practice at the Scottish Bar in 2002, John has pursued a full-time mediation career in business, the professions, sport, the public sector and senior management and, as its founder and chief executive, has established Core Solutions Group (www.core-solutions.com) as a pre-eminent provider of mediation, training, negotiation and facilitation services. His mediation practice extends throughout the UK, mainland Europe and the Middle East and he also practices from Brick Court Chambers in London.

Considered a "thought leader" and "one of the best teachers of mediation", he specialises in negotiation and conflict management training and has facilitated many high-level political and policy dialogues. For many years he has worked with various parliamentary bodies throughout the UK on effective scrutiny of policy. He has been a special adviser on dialogue to the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and works regularly with senior officials in the Scottish Government. He facilitated the 2020 Climate Change Delivery Group in Scotland from 2009 to 2013. He is a founder of Collaborative Scotland (www.collaborativescotland.org), which promoted respectful dialogue before and after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. In 2009 John became a Distinguished Fellow of the International Academy of Mediators. He received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from Edinburgh Napier University in 2010 in recognition of his work in the field. He has also recently been appointed a Visiting Professor by the University of Edinburgh.