

Have you ever heard someone say, "the problem is that you just can't trust him?" When trust is low we sometimes just give up on the person and figure it's hopeless. In contrast, sometimes we say we just need to be more trusting. Actually, neither of these is likely to improve the situation. Trust grows when agreements are made and kept. This means that we need to be clear about our expectations. Often we miss an opportunity to improve our trust level because we leave our agreements in a very unclear state and open to different interpretations. This isn't a problem when trust is high but is a definite problem when trust is low. So, if you want to work at improving trust in some relationship, you need to first make some agreements and they need to be clear so that they can be monitored. Then keep the agreements and you will find that trust grows. It doesn't go from nothing to high trust with one agreement but it does begin to grow. Some describe trust building like climbing a ladder, you go up a step at a time. The opportunity is to make agreements and keep them and gradually build trust. The danger is that if agreements are made and not kept, the trust ladder analogy again applies in that you are likely to fall all the way to the bottom.

The VORP process is one of helping people make clear agreements and then encouraging them to keep them. The job of encouraging offenders to keep their agreements is a large part of the job description of our Restitution Manager. Often restitution is one of the key agreements made in the VORP process. Beth Holck is a volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program and serving full time this year with VORP. Following is her description of some of her work. Names and some details related to the victim and offender have been changed to protect identities.

Completion of Restitution Contract Brings Gratification

As Restitution Manager at VORP, my job is to monitor ongoing restitution contracts. It is a position that requires the patience of Job. Sometimes it is frustrating. Progress may be slow and sometimes offenders can only pay a small bit of their contract at a time. When a restitution contract comes quietly to completion, however, the gratification of long held patience restores all people involved. Recently I assisted in closing such a case.

About a month ago, I received the final restitution payment from Doug on a contract that was signed in November 1984. Doug, now 21, succeeded in repaying nearly \$4,000 to Karen, the victim, over the course of six years. The longevity of the case impressed me and I decided to look back and review the original case.

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I discovered that the offense being restored was burglary. In 1984 Doug broke into Karen's house and took money, jewelry, and a VCR. Several of the items of jewelry had personal significance to Karen and her family. Doug had been a friend of the family for quite some time. These things added strong feelings of violation to the incident.

Doug had at least one other cohort who assisted in the burglary however he said he did not know the names of the others involved. Thus he accepted responsibility on his own. The others who assisted in the burglary had done so with retaliatory intent because of a fist fight in which Karen's son was involved. Because Doug knew the family and had access to a spare key, his involvement was enlisted in the burglary.

The case was referred to VORP. Each of the parties were contacted. After some initial hesitation from each of the parties a joint meeting was arranged.

Jinny Daily, VORP Volunteer Mediator, mediated the case and noted the success of the joint meeting. She remarked on the restorative content of the meeting itself. "I thought the meeting went great, an example of what the VORP process is all about, helping to mend lives with reconciliation."

Today as Karen reflects on the case she has similar sentiments. While she noted that there is and will remain a certain sadness when she thinks of the incident, she believes that overall it's a resolved issue. Karen said that in a former job she worked with many victims who never got to that point. She also feels positively about lessons Doug learned from this situation. As each payment was made, trust grew just a little.

As I reflected on the case I was reminded of the story of the servant who owed his master ten thousand talents (dollars) in Matthew 18: 23-26. When the servant is confronted with his debt he falls to his knees and cries out, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything."

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By heeding that plea, space for reconciliation is granted, agreement may be made, and when kept, trust begins to build again.

Thanks Beth!

David Augsburger to Speak at VORP Gathering April 11th

On April 11 you are invited to the Fourth Annual VORP Gathering. Our guest speaker is Dr. David Augsburger, professor of Pastoral Care at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of CARING ENOUGH TO CONFRONT, FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS, and more than 20 other titles. His feature articles have appeared in over 100 periodicals. He will be speaking to us on the theme of "How are we going to respond to the nations crime problem - allout war, forgiveness, retribution, reconciliation, enforcement, negotiation? And, what is VORPs role?" In our participatory tradition, we will again have a potluck meal. A-M bring a salad and dessert, N-Z bring a main dish and rolls. College Community Church fellowship hall. 6:30pm.

VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS ARE NEEDED!

There are at least 150 appropriate juvenile cases per month which could be referred if there were enough volunteer mediators to work with them. Currently we are working with about 30 per month. The next training is April 23 and 30. Call Beth or Elaine for details.

Full-time Staff person needed

Please don't forget, VORP relies entirely on your contributions. Our goal is to expand the monthly contributions so that we can hire a full time or even part time person who would be with VORP long term to help with the training and transition times. It would only take each of you receiving this newsletter giving \$10 per month. Thanks for your consideration.

I'm sure you have noticed our Newsletter's improved layout. Thanks goes to Mark Hill, a long time member of our Board of Directors, who volunteers his time and computer to make this possible.

Shalom

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