

## How to Trust When Trust Is Not Certain?

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A titan of American academia, business and diplomacy, former Secretary of State George P. Shultz has died. He spent most of the 1980s trying to improve Cold War relations with the Soviet Union and forging a course for peace in the Middle East. He held four major Cabinet positions during a lengthy career of public service -- labor secretary, treasury secretary, and director of the Office of Management and Budget under President Richard M. Nixon before spending more than six years as President Ronald Reagan's secretary of state. Schultz was the longest serving secretary of state since World War II and had been the oldest surviving former Cabinet member of any administration.

Shultz had largely stayed out of politics since his retirement but had been an advocate for an increased focus on climate change. He marked his 100th birthday last December by extolling the virtues of trust and bipartisanship in politics and other endeavors in a piece he wrote for The Washington Post. Amidst the acrimony that followed November's presidential election, Shultz's call for decency and respect for opposing views struck many as an appeal for the country to shun the political vitriol of the Trump years.

*"Trust is the coin of the realm," Shultz wrote. "When trust was in the room, whatever room that was – the family room, the schoolroom, the locker room, the office room, the government room or the military room – good things happened. When trust was not in the room, good things did not happen. Everything else is details."*

Trust lives somewhere between Intention and Flow. It often feels to me like a moving target, a dance that has no conclusion. But with trust, circumstances are defining. Yet Trust remains, like the air we breathe, there or not.

In writing this article, my process was tough and flawed. I usually had other intentions in parallel during the weeks it took me to finish. The quality of my Flow and Intention fluctuated, changing as daily work, unexpected opportunity and choices determined my schedule. These affected the committed time frame and eventually passed the deadline to complete the article. My shifting attention and

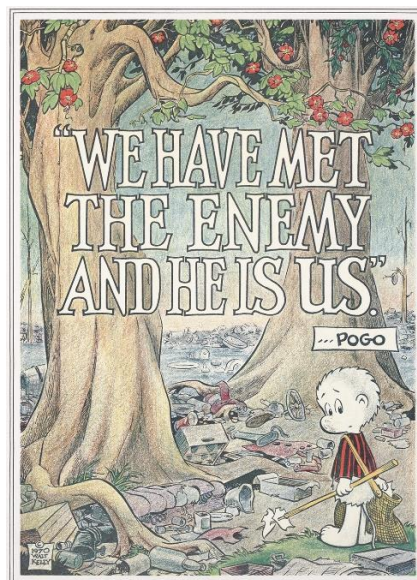
commitment to Flow over Intention had left me and the people around me without confidence..., without Trust.

The hard part is that I'm not sure if I've learned anything. My personal reality is that I hardly ever have a problem with time. I'm usually content while other people are too often disappointed. I'm often criticized for not keeping my word or changing it. My experience of conflict moves through a flowing reality in which none of this is really a problem, and where I am actually operating from my intentions, both promised and unexamined. When I'm asked for things, my Intention is to give people I care about all the help I can. But it's said that "The Road to Hell is paved with good intentions." I'm starting to wonder.

I've ruined trust with people I care about and with people I didn't care about. There are those who never trusted me in the first place, of course. It's sometimes easier to operate with people I don't know, but it's often not long for the bloom to fade from the rose.

Trust is a ship sailing on sea of human differences, conflicts, financial, logistical and personal preferences, arbitrary positions, expectations, agreements, and issues made important for comfort or ego. The diversity of conflicts is both subtle and beyond accurate representation. Yet each can exist in a dynamic of multiple parties and perspectives. To be alone, to Unify Intention and Flow, to develop skills, face obstacles, and to fail are always possible.

As Walt Kelly, of POGO fame said, 'I have met the enemy and he is us.'



If I can come to trust now that the enemy is me, will I always be truthful and trustworthy in the future? This isn't a matter of content or details, but a never-ending question of asking myself, "Who Am I?"

When talking to myself or others, there is a choice. Will I say what I want to say, or do I say what I think the other can hear? What's the best way for me to achieve Intention and Flow at the same time, as if they were one thing? Trust as my bottom line would have to become an emotional, mental, physical, and mental reality, playing the music one beat at a time. Trust is not pre-determined.

When I trust, am I listening to myself with the outcome I truly desire as focus, or am I trying to prove something? The visceral experience I or you are actually having is the best barometer for what is really happening. Do I have an agenda? Is the agenda rooted in Force and a likely source of distrust?

I mean to have Listening become a decisive practice. Having intentions and opinions scattered and unfocused between private motives and shared reality is another of my trap doors in which motives are driving the car. What matters and flows are no longer available. When I allow too many flows and intentions to guide me, I end up delayed and ineffective.

Sometimes, the listening part of me is dedicated to my greatest intent, but not easy. It seems to require sacrifice, choosing and prioritizing amongst intents. If the listening part of me follows flow, I start to feel like I have no rudder in the river at all. My intentions often don't seem possible in the "natural" flow. I've often rationalized my resistance to flow as the dictates of my intentions, and while alone indeed this seems reasonable, the truth is that I'm never really alone, and my intentions are not all equal.

### **Listening as the Space Between.**

Typically, I order my intentions by what I currently think is best. When I have a goal and no distractions that is easy. It doesn't matter if I am being with myself or another person. The easy way of flow is to dance with my listening and my intentions. At best, my listening creates the space, the room to choose, between everything. But usually, I choose to create the space with my intent and not flow, and to allow the flow to fill the space that's left.

**Where is the urgency coming from? Where is the anger and disappointment?**

Conflicts are remembered in history for their devastation. In my memory, the conflicts that occur are resolved or are left alone, peacefully resting unresolved and in experience beyond access. Why would the fall of Troy be different than my last unsuccessful relationship, or last project unsatisfied? I would say nothing, except for details and circumstance. The endings are the same in that such conflicts began and end with specific intent. Where in the narrative that drives your thinking during conflict are there urges, drives, or a sense of urgency? These can of course be valuable guides for oneself, but how valuable are they really in a conflict? To me, they are only valuable to signify my implicit intent taking over the flow of conflict.

When you know what is needed and what is possible, urgency is not effective. When you know you are accurate in a debate, urgency is rarely poignant or effective. So where is the urgency coming from? If you can answer that question, you might be able to avoid urgency altogether. There is no way to do this unless the guiding intent and goal is to work well together, even in a conflict. Without that, the alternative is anything else.

Do you experience anger during conflict, or persistent disappointment afterwards? I am sorry to say that is your fault, not because of the conflict. The occurring experience is the final barometer but understanding there is high pressure doesn't mean you won't get wet from the rain.

Do you hold learning as the highest priority, or being right? The experience of anger and disappointment that stems from the intent of being right, usually occurs not when others are wrong but once you realize you are. Learning the truth is an ideal, not learning a lie. It's a tough pill when conflicts are commonly known to have winners and losers. Unless the goal is learning, everyone loses in a conflict.

Conflicts are intimately known once they get volatile. Many conflicts are between people who care about each other, and all too often the occurrence of a conflict is, on its own, the basis of another conflict. Devastation and tragedy are defined by their loss and sorrow, and on the personal level there is no denying upset, occurring conflict, and the reality of unfavorable outcomes. If you have an experience of bad outcome, then there is a definite responsibility at play. It is a conscious act to hold onto an intent, but often the act is not made consciously.

## **Why does the Unity of Intention and Flow help?**

Unifying Intention and Flow parallels the story of “Sisyphus” in which a man upsets a God and is forced to push a heavy rock up a hill forever, only to watch it roll down the hill again. Negotiating reality around intention is a power move that often results in resistance and distrust. It’s capable of protecting your sense of self-importance, and drive conversation and reality toward your goal. Clarifying intentions, declaring focus, and steady awareness of the way flows can fluctuate brings a sense of complete responsibility to me, when I remember to seek the Unity of Intention and Flow. Having the meta goal of learning clarifies this for me and lessens despondence and pain. When all parties are committed to learning, a chance for true magic, connection and creativity happens. Sometimes, too often, that goal isn't shared.