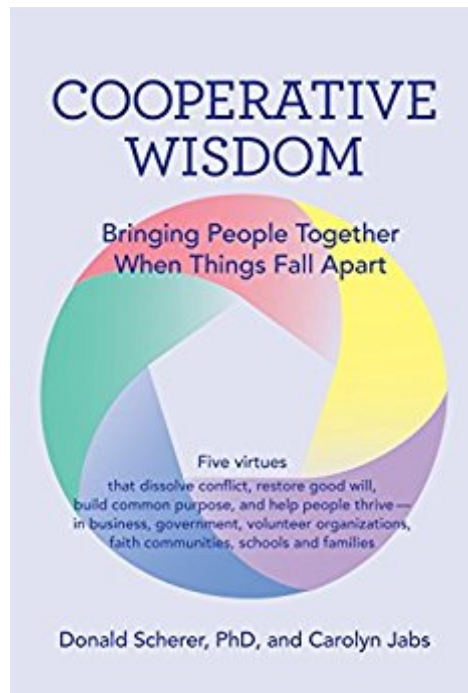


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# Cooperative Wisdom: Bringing People Together When Things Fall Apart



## Synopsis

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 Jablonski 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. Proactive compassion anticipates and responds to vulnerability. Deep discernment uncovers bedrock values. Intentional imagination expands our sense of what's possible. Inclusive integrity reworks cooperative structures so everyone can thrive. 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.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Why is it so hard for people to work together? Is it worse today than it used to be? How can those who value cooperation over competition continue in the climate of 2016? Donald Scherer and Carolyn Jabs offer some insightful and thought provoking ways to re-think the problems inherent when people with good intentions have trouble working together in their book Cooperative Wisdom. Scherer, a retired philosophy professor from Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH) and Jabs, a former student of Scherer and a professional writer, offer a conversational approach to what could otherwise be a dense and difficult thesis. They offer five social virtues that help define what it is that sometimes makes people seem so intractable. With each of the five virtues, they give three exercises to help further understand the concepts. If it sounds like a "How To" book, it isn't. It's more of a launch pad to continue difficult work. Most of us live by the adage that

conflict is neutral, it just shows interest. Scherer and Jabs offer some ways to think through conflict to arrive at the core underlying the interest that causes the conflict. And once that interest can be defined and claimed, the process can begin, again. In *Cooperative Wisdom* the authors do not sugar coat the reality of working together in the middle and later part of the second decade of the twenty-first century. What they offer is a way to break free from the destructive way conflict is often approached and far too often ignored.

I know this book well. I partnered as an editor with the authors for nearly two years, helping them work out the book's organization and details of the writing. In a way, that makes writing a review more difficult. Aside from the likelihood of bias (which I freely admit), I take for granted by now some of the most striking features what Don Scherer and Carolyn Jabs have accomplished. These include their friendly, assured tone; the conversational mode that eases the reader through often complex arguments; and the hopeful, encouraging spirit with which they confront contemporary society's discouraging and vexing disunities. These qualities spring directly from Don and Carolyn's original experience as professor and student, and the mutually productive relationship they've cultivated since. But translating inspired teaching to the page is far from easy. In this they've succeeded remarkably, drawing readers into the most consequential kind of conversation between teacher and learner, one that can truly be life-changing. There's enough about content on this page to give prospective readers a solid sense of what the book covers. I want to talk instead about its impact on my own life and work. Not long before starting this project, I moved from a big city to a small town, and soon found that I no longer could (even if I wished to) enjoy or suffer the anonymity of urban life. I discovered the joys and perils of community in ways I'd never understood before. Never mind the invitations to join boards and choral groups; if I got annoyed at someone's driving and shared my feelings in any of the usual obnoxious ways, inevitably the stupid driver would turn out to be a neighbor. And I did become active on the board of a local land trust, just then embroiled in a paralyzing power struggle.

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