

Consultation Skills for Couples and Families

Sweden Bahá'í Summer School
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Presenter
Susanne M. Alexander
Marriage Transformation®



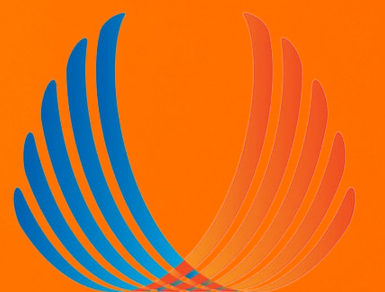
Yesterday's Topics

- Creating new marriages and families
- Equality in marriages and families
- Importance of respect in couples and families
- Afternoon Workshop: Positive communication practices that build unity



Today's Topics

- Consultation skills for couples and families
- Consultation practice
- Afternoon Workshop: Parenting children to live meaningful and purposeful lives and holding family meetings



Learning Together



“Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.”

(Universal House of Justice, January 17, 2003)

“Endeavors are pursued in a **humble posture of learning....**”

(Universal House of Justice, December 27, 2005)

What Is Consultation?

A form of collaborative dialogue, based on spiritual principles and behaviors, that builds understanding and can lead to unified decisions



- **Goal:** Integrate into Courtship, Marriage, and Family Culture
- **Includes:** All topics, both light and serious
- Informal or formal approach and settings
- Couples are equal partners



Purposes of Consultation

“Consultation bestows greater **awareness** and transmutes conjecture into **certitude**. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, **leads the way and guides**. ... The maturity of the gift of **understanding** is made manifest through consultation.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by the Universal House of Justice, October 1985)



Purposes of Consultation

“In all things it is necessary to consult...inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilation of Compilations, Vol. I, #170)



Purposes of Consultation

“... [I]t must be remembered that the purpose of consultation **need not always be to arrive at a particular or final decision**. Often the aim may simply be to engage in an exchange of views so as to help **clarify a certain matter and bring about unity of vision.**”

(Universal House of Justice, May 19, 2009, to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

“Consultation has been ordained by Bahá'u'lláh as the means by which **agreement is to be reached and a collective course of action defined.**”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1986–2001, #149)





Consultation in Marriage and Family

“The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of the Bahá’í ideal of family life. Bahá’u’lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. [O]ne of the **keys to the strengthening of unity is loving consultation.**”

(Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, #734)



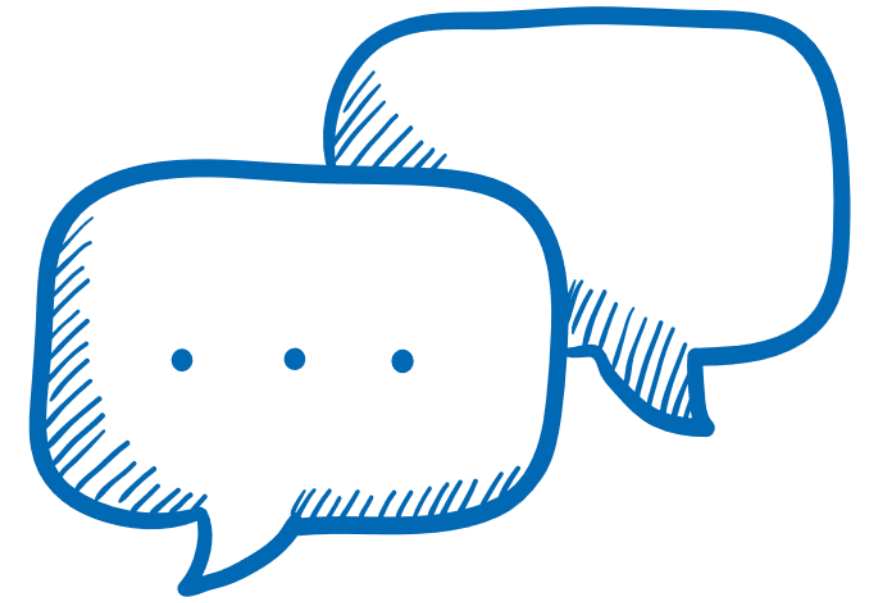
Consultation in Marriage and Family

“Consultation ... is **applicable to the marriage partners and within the family**, and indeed in all areas where believers participate in mutual decision-making. It requires all participants to **express their opinions with absolute freedom and without apprehension that they will be censured and/or their views belittled**; these prerequisites for success are unattainable if the fear of violence or abuse are present.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1986–2001*, #149)



Activity



What are some topics that can be important for couples and families to consult about?

Vilka ämnen kan vara viktiga för par och familjer att rådgöra om?

Some Possible Approaches

1. Before: Clear Goal/Issue
2. Before: Gather Facts (harmony of science and religion)
3. Before: Self-Awareness: Reflect on Thoughts and Feelings
4. Before: Timeliness
5. Before: Check on Well-Being
6. All Times: Prayers
7. Respect/Courtesy: Share and Listen to Thoughts and Feelings
8. Open Search for Truth; Contribute and Detach
9. Include Others As Needed; Defer As Needed
10. Unified understanding or an agreement on a decision
11. Shared action plan and identified responsibilities





Some Guiding Principles: Discovering Truth

“The shining spark of **truth** cometh forth only after the clash of **differing opinions**.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, #44)

“It is important to note that truth emerges after the ‘clash’ of carefully articulated views (which may well be expressed with enthusiasm and vigor), **not from the clash of feelings**. A clash of feelings is likely to obscure the truth, while a difference of opinion facilitates the discovery of truth.”

(Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, “Issues Concerning Community Functioning”, section 2, p. 6)



Some Guiding Principles: Discovering Truth

“... [C]onsultation ... requires **love, kindliness, moral courage and humility.**”

(Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, #590)

“... [S]tubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the **truth will remain hidden.**”

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 22)



Some Guiding Principles: Moderation and Virtues

“The **preservation of unity** within the family, and the maintenance of a **setting in which all members of the family may grow spiritually**, requires **moderation and restraint** by all concerned. Family consultation is a vital element in the development of a sound relationship; the principles of consultation enumerated by the Master, including **courtesy, respect for the views of others, and the full and frank expression of opinions**, are applicable to relationships within the family....”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “Ruhi Book 10 Building Vibrant Communities, Unit 2 Consultation”)



Some Guiding Principles: Moderation and Virtues

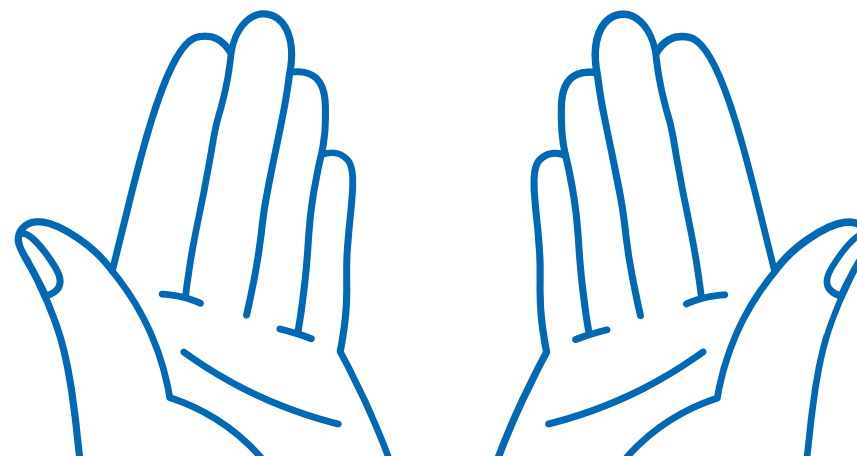
“Family consultation employing **full and frank discussion**, and animated by awareness of the need for **moderation and balance**, can be the panacea for domestic conflict. Wives should **not attempt to dominate** their husbands, nor husbands their wives....”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II, #2160)



Some Guiding Principles: Turning to God; Reaching Consensus

“... Bahá’í consultation is to be undertaken with the utmost **love, sincerity, and unity**. Its participants must come together in a **prayerful attitude**, seeking assistance from the Realm of Glory, **expressing their thoughts freely, surrendering all attachment** to their individual opinions, and giving **fair-minded and careful consideration** to the views of others, in an effort to reach consensus.”
(Universal House of Justice, May 19, 2009, to the Baha’is of Iran)



Some Guiding Principles: Handling Differences



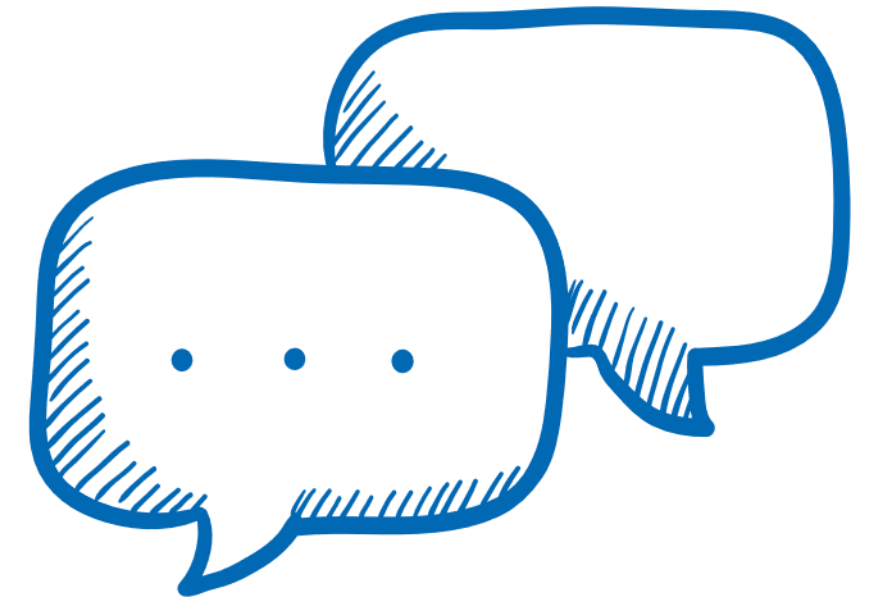
“Consultation is no easy skill to learn, requiring as it does the subjugation of all egotism and unruly passions, [and] the cultivation of frankness and freedom of thought ...”

(Universal House of Justice, Messages 1963 to 1986, p. 95)





Activity



**What virtues do you find
most effective and
helpful in your marriage
and family
consultations?**



**Vilka dygder tycker du är
mest effektiva och
hjälpssamma i era rådslag
inom äktenskapet och
familjen?**



Some Guiding Principles: Handling Differences

“It is clear from the problems you have described that there is a need for **sympathetic communication** between you and your husband. This can be achieved through **love and respect** for each other and **patient understanding**. Our Bahá’í teachings concerning marriage also underscore the importance of **tenderness** between husband and wife. **Consultation provides a means** through which these qualities can be practiced to great advantage, and it is hoped that you will find a way to engage in such consultation with your husband.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “To Set the World in Order, #82)



Some Guiding Principles: Handling Differences

“... [E]xert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they **should not reach the point of causing conflict**, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when **enmity and threats** are about to occur, you should immediately **postpone** discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “Consultation”, #18)



Some Guiding Principles: Handling Differences

“In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be **no majority** where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should **defer** to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, #751)



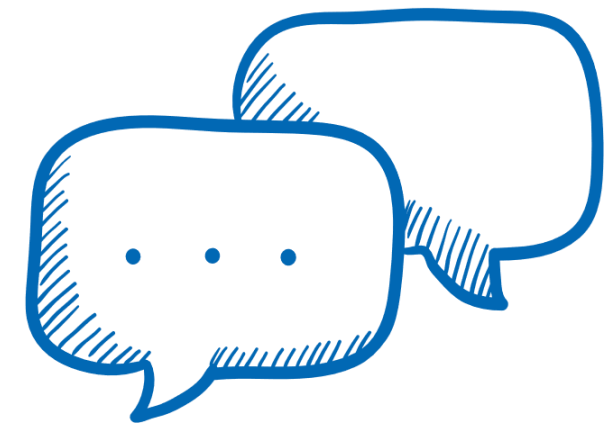
Some Guiding Principles Handling Differences

“Exactly under what circumstances such **deference** should take place is a matter for each couple to determine. If, God forbid, they **fail to agree**, and their disagreement leads to estrangement, they should **seek counsel from those they trust and in whose sincerity and sound judgment they have confidence**, in order to preserve and strengthen their ties as a united family.”

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, “To Set the World in Order”, #33)



Activity



- **When might deferring to a partner be necessary, helpful, or reasonable?**
- **What helps you stay supportive of what a partner carries out?**
- **When do you come back together as a couple to consult on the actions underway?**
- **När kan det vara nödvändigt, hjälpsamt eller rimligt att ge företräde åt sin partner?**
- **Vad hjälper dig att vara stöttande i det som din partner genomför?**
- **När samlas ni som par igen för att rådslå om de åtgärder som pågår?**



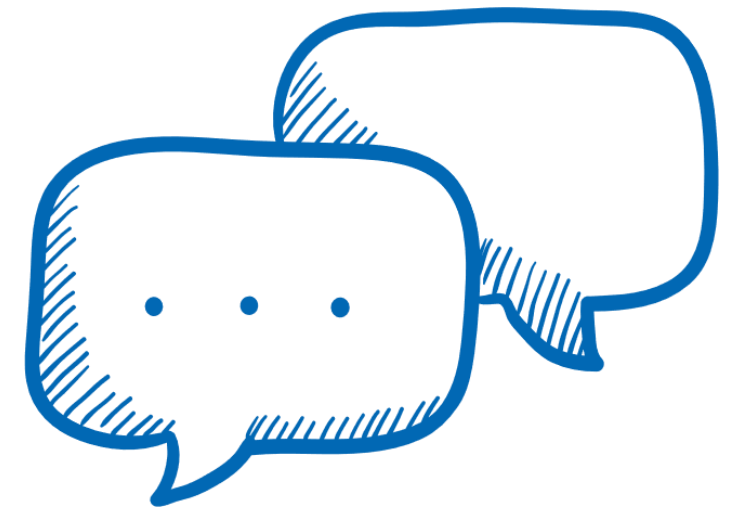
After Consultation

“Once a decision has been reached, all members of the consultative body, having had the opportunity fully to state their views, agree wholeheartedly to support the outcome. What if the minority view is right? ‘If they **agree upon a subject,**’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has explained, ‘even though **it be wrong, it is better than to disagree, and be in the right,** for this difference will produce the demolition of the divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree, that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs, but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is **in unity, the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right.**”

(Universal House of Justice, Dec 29, 1988, “Individual Rights and Freedoms”, p. 13)



Activity



What helps you carry out decisions in unity?

Vad hjälper er att genomföra beslut i enighet?

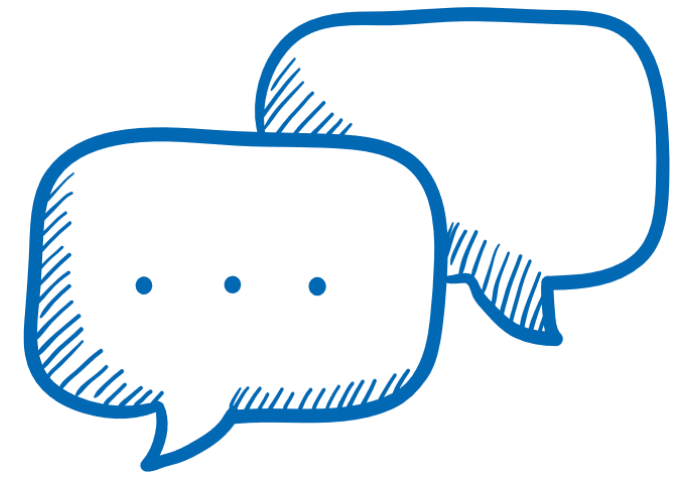
Social Transformation

“... [F]ostering the capacity for the investigation of truth, for appreciation of the harmony of science and religion, for **resolving differences of opinion and making decisions through consultation and cooperation** rather than contention and contest **empowers family members as effective protagonists in a process of social transformation.**”

(Universal House of Justice, March 19, 2025, para. 14)



Activity

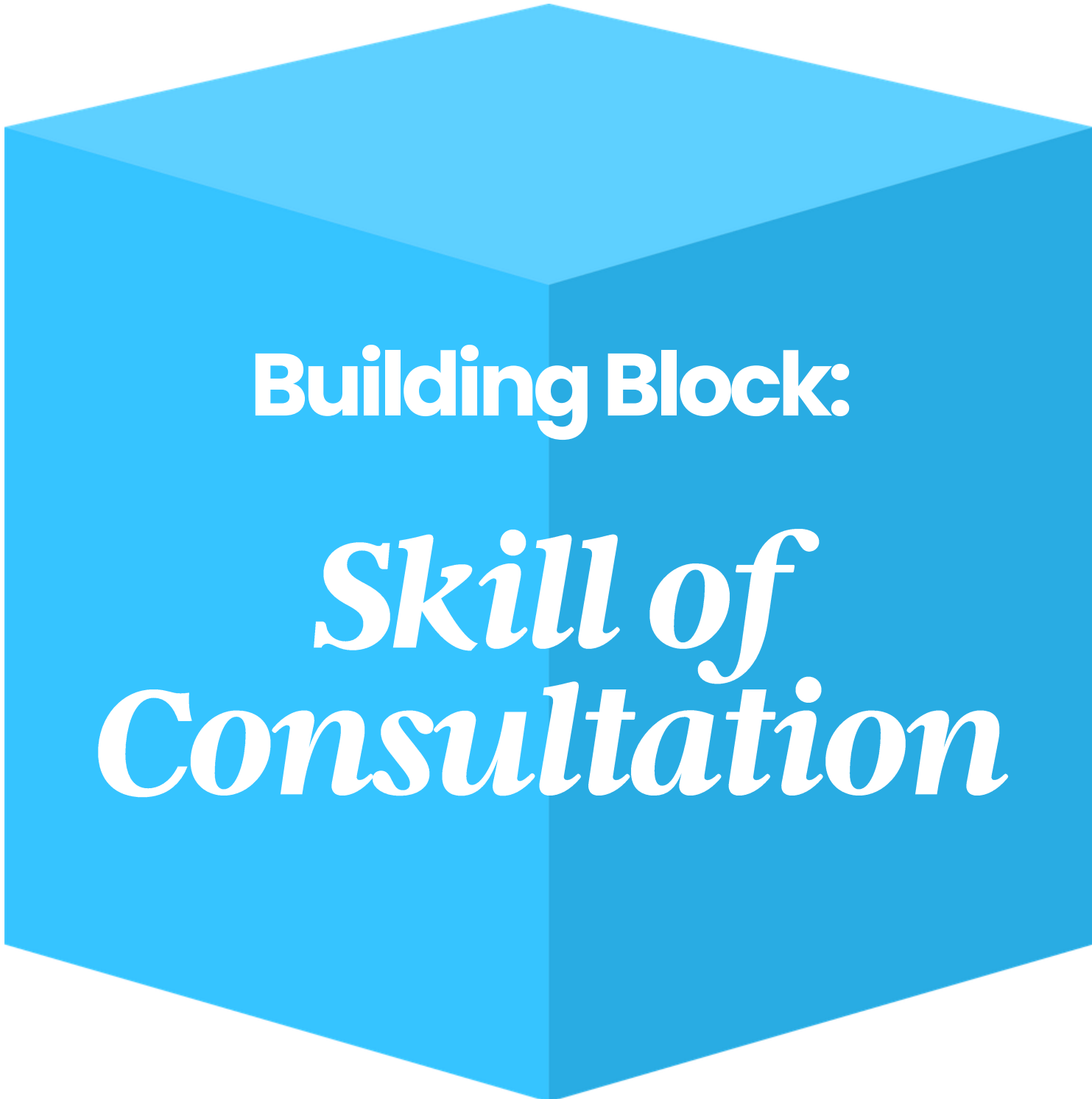


How is consulting as a couple and family helping you contribute to community building and social transformation?



Hur hjälper er rådslag som par och familj er att bidra till samhällsbyggande och social omvandling?

Consultation As a Fundamental Instrument for Unity

A 3D blue cube graphic, tilted to show its top, front-left, and front-right faces. The text is placed on the front-left face.

Building Block:

*Skill of
Consultation*

Invitation: To Be a Marriage,
Family, and Community Builder

**Du inbjuds till att bli en
äktenskaps-, familje- och
samhällsbyggare!**

Afternoon Workshop:

**Parenting Children to Live Meaningful
and Purposeful Lives and
Holding Family Meetings**

***Thank You
Tack***



Susanne M. Alexander
Marriage Transformation®