

UNITED WISDOM

Solidarity That Preserves the Recipient’s Voice

Relationships and Intimacy

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

R-29-N05 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Solidarity That Preserves the Recipient’s Voice

Epigraph

> *“Mutual interests”.*

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), Chapter VI. A short fragment about neighbourhood relationships. It offers a historical point of comparison for discussing help, without promising that interests coincide. Primary text.

What this article is about

Neighbours want to help someone after a difficult move. They find furniture, raise money, and suggest an announcement. The person thanks them but asks them to keep her story private for now and help transport a work desk instead of a sofa. The group feels awkward: it has already arranged the sofa donation and written a moving account. Refusal seems to undo a good deed. Yet this is precisely where the central question arises: does the person receiving help remain a participant in decisions about her own life?

Solidarity needs resources, time, and reliable action. But the scale of help does not tell us who determines its purpose. Someone may accept one part of an offer, change another, and decline a third. Disagreement with another person’s plan alone does not establish ingratitude. Through a hypothetical neighbourhood initiative, we will distinguish a need, a proposed method, and helpers’ authority; preserve both sides’ limits; and examine the result without demanding obligatory gratitude.

I. A need does not specify its solution

In our hypothetical story, Svetlana has moved into a small flat. She needs a work desk to finish several commissions. Her neighbour Boris sees an almost empty room and offers to collect things. Alina, coordinating the effort, finds a sofa, crockery, and an opportunity to hold a fundraising evening. All these offers might help. It remains unclear which fits Svetlana’s immediate task and has a place in her life.

The first distinction separates an observable limitation from an assumed way out. The empty room is observable; the need for that particular sofa has not been established. Several boxes might ease the move or occupy space needed for work. An opportunity to raise money does

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

not determine how it should be used. When these steps merge, an available resource begins to look like the only reasonable answer to the need.

We can ask what result the person considers important now. Svetlana wants a desk by Thursday because her work is due on Friday. This answer does not describe her entire life or make other difficulties disappear. It establishes a limited purpose for help. Boris may explain that he can transport only a small item and only in the evening. Two specific answers produce a task the parties can discuss without promising to solve everything.

People do not always know immediately what they need. It is reasonable to offer options, help measure the room, or allow time to answer. But the absence of a ready solution does not transfer the right to choose to the helper. Temporary uncertainty can remain a shared task. A small agreed step is enough to explore it; there is no need to declare someone incapable of managing their life or turn an urgent offer into an obligation to accept at once.

A need may first become clear through a negative answer. Svetlana does not yet know which desk will fit, but she knows that a large sofa would block the passage. This is already relevant information. Refusal need not include a finished alternative project to count as reasonable. Excluding an unsuitable option may be the first step towards a solution, even if it temporarily leaves the group without a convenient task.

Clarification needs a limit. If Boris can make only one trip, he may ask for an answer by a specified time and explain why. Svetlana may not be able to decide in time. The opportunity then disappears, but refusal or delay does not itself become a moral offence. A missed resource differs from a broken promise: a promise exists only where someone actually committed to a specific action.

II. A voice must be able to change the plan

Alina asks Svetlana what she would like but sends the old announcement afterwards. The text still promises a sofa and a public evening. Formally, the recipient has spoken. In practice, her answer has changed no decision. Asking a question alone therefore does not establish participation. We need to see what changed after the answer and where disagreement remains.

Svetlana need not approve the entire plan for her comment to matter. She can accept transport for the desk while declining a collection of household goods. The helpers may explain that the available transport can carry only the sofa and that moving the desk would require another day. This identifies a real constraint rather than a dispute over gratitude. There may be no agreed solution yet. That is more honest than recording every preference as “taken into account” and continuing unchanged.

A voice can change a plan by refining the purpose, excluding an action, choosing a time, or ending an offer. Sometimes the outcome stays the same because another option is unavailable. Even then, the person needs an intelligible explanation rather than an impression that the request simply vanished. They should be able to see which limit belongs to the helper’s resource, which to the shared arrangement, and which remains an untested assumption.

This differs from the question of whether someone is believed as a witness. We can fully believe that Svetlana needs a desk and still administer the help without her participation. Respecting a report and having authority to choose are different matters. Solidarity that preserves a voice requires more than attentive listening: it lets the recipient change an action performed in her name, even when helpers feel certain of their good purpose.

One simple way to see how an answer entered the work is to return a short account of the conversation’s result. Alina can say that the collection has stopped, the desk search continues, and publication is still unagreed. If she misunderstood, Svetlana can correct the account before action. This record serves the participants first; it does not require sharing private correspondence with the whole group or making every favour a public report.

When the group cannot accommodate a preference, it can say so directly. Perhaps there is nowhere to store the items, and the donor’s offer lasts only one day. The recipient need not find that convenient; the group need not create a nonexistent warehouse. Sometimes the available exit is to end this particular attempt. A voice remains intact if the person knows what stopped and why, and refusal is not rewritten as acceptance of a less suitable option.

III. An offer does not create an indefinite mandate

Boris offers to move the desk. Svetlana agrees. This authorises a particular action involving a specified item; it does not put Boris in charge of the whole flat. If he decides to unpack boxes and discard an old chair as well, a new task has arisen. Even when these additions seem convenient, the earlier agreement does not establish whether they are acceptable.

Ordinary words can describe the mandate: which item, from where, to where, when, and with whom present. Such clarity does not turn friendly help into a cold transaction. It reduces the number of decisions someone will have to undo after another person’s initiative. Svetlana may ask for the desk to be left near the door while she chooses a place. Boris may decline to carry it upstairs if he cannot. Both boundaries concern the task.

Trust does not require authorising every possible improvement in advance. Someone can trust another person to carry furniture while retaining the choice of where it goes. They can accept groceries without permitting a conversation with their employer. They can ask for help completing a form without authorising its submission. The more an action changes the

recipient’s position, the more important it is to distinguish the offer from what they actually asked the helper to do.

A mandate also has a duration. Permission to contact a donor today need not continue a month later when circumstances have changed. If help takes longer, it is worth returning to the question of current need. This is not a test of consistency: the need may have changed because work has already been done. Good support allows its own role to end rather than making past acceptance proof of permanent need and continuing access to the person.

A mandate can allow a small range of decisions. Svetlana permits Boris to choose between two named routes but asks him to call if a different address becomes necessary. This is convenient delegation, not a loss of autonomy. Both sides need to understand the boundary: what the helper decides and which new question returns to the recipient. A person also retains a voice when voluntarily relieving themselves of some minor approvals.

Someone can exceed that boundary by mistake, without bad intentions. Boris places the desk where he thinks it will be convenient. Repair starts with acknowledging that action and asking whether it can be moved. No one needs to establish that he is a bad helper or that Svetlana is too demanding. Yet a statement about good intentions does not finish the discussion: the item’s position has changed, and that consequence requires separate attention.

IV. Resources and authority are different

Alina has contacts and experience organising collections. Svetlana has fewer. This difference enables help while creating a risk: the person controlling a resource may begin defining the purpose around their own convenience. A fundraising evening, for example, is easier to organise if the story is brief, emotional, and public. Ease of fundraising does not establish that Svetlana agreed to turn her private life into material for it.

A helper may limit an offer. Alina can explain that she does not know how to raise funds without publication and cannot take responsibility for another arrangement. This is a material condition to discuss before acceptance. It does not oblige the recipient to accept publicity. If the parties cannot find a suitable method, the offer can remain unused. Refusing one resource does not show that the need was invented.

Sometimes a resource is offered for a particular purpose. A donor will give the sofa but will not provide money for a desk. Svetlana acquires no right to demand a different gift. At the same time, she can say she does not need the sofa now. These boundaries are compatible. The helper controls the offer; the recipient decides whether to bring it into their life. Neither owns the other’s decision because they spent time or experienced disappointment.

The distinction becomes particularly important after a resource arrives. Svetlana may discover that the desk will not fit through the door. The parties need to discuss returning it, replacing it, or finding another place, rather than automatically blaming her for inconsistency. Payment for another trip depends on earlier agreements and available options; there is no universal answer here. Costs can be considered separately from the right to report a problem. Otherwise, accepting an item removes the person’s voice just when its limitation appears.

The group has its own limits of responsibility. If a friend doing the transport cannot promise to keep a fragile object intact, this should be stated before the decision. Svetlana can choose another method or accept a known uncertainty. Hiding the limitation to ensure acceptance withholds a material part of the choice. Confidence in an intention does not replace information about what can actually be done.

Resource differences may persist after help. A desk does not give Svetlana Alina’s contacts or free time. One gift need not be presented as eliminating inequality. Neither should a limited benefit be dismissed because it did not remove every difficulty. Retaining the right to determine the next task allows discussion of what remains, without an obligation to accept each new offer or a demand to become completely independent at once.

V. Shared life does not remove differences

In Chapter VI of *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Jane Addams connects settlement work with flexible methods and relationships with neighbours. This is an early twentieth-century historical self-account, not research on contemporary mutual aid. It can be compared with our question: can a helper change their method when people respond differently from what they expected? Chapter VI.

The comparison has a limit. Addams also discusses settlement residents’ public role. Such a role may include representation, but it cannot replace an individual’s consent to a particular publication or appeal. We do not transfer the historical descriptions of neighbours into present guidance. Our editorial conclusion is narrower: familiarity with another person’s life does not automatically authorise speaking in their name.

In the hypothetical initiative, Boris and Svetlana may gradually learn which arrangement works. One agreed trip might help more than a general collection of possessions. This does not mean all help must begin with a long friendship. Sometimes a one-off service and a clear ending are enough. Common ground grows from connecting different interests in an action the participants understand and can limit, without requiring emotional intimacy.

Differences need not be hidden to produce a beautiful story of unity. The trip uses Boris’s free evening; a delay changes Svetlana’s working week. Alina answers to the people offering items; Svetlana manages the space in her flat. Each experiences a different part of the

consequences. Naming them does not destroy solidarity. It challenges the assumption that a shared good intention makes every decision equally convenient and every loss equally bearable.

A common interest sometimes lasts only briefly. Boris wants to clear a desk from his garage; Svetlana wants somewhere to work. This coincidence need not prove a deep unity of beliefs. Agreeing on the item’s condition, transport, and future is enough. A practical connection can be respectful precisely because it requires no emotional debt, group membership, or detailed account of the reasons for the move.

If interests diverge, the account should preserve that difference. Alina prefers a large public evening; Svetlana prefers a quiet, limited solution. Neither answer automatically makes the other party worse. Yet an event cannot both be called the person’s voluntary choice and proceed against her answer. Disagreement requires a different arrangement or a stop; an attractive shared name does not perform that work or enrol the recipient without her decision.

VI. Representation needs a separate answer

Alina offers to write to a workshop owner to obtain a cheaper desk. Svetlana agrees to the request but wants her personal circumstances left out. Measurements and a budget can be shared without retelling the move. If Alina considers an explanation necessary, she must return to the question rather than expand the mandate herself. Information’s usefulness to a helper is not permission to pass it on.

Representation differs from assistance. Providing a contact is one action; writing in someone’s name is another; making a promise for them is a third. Svetlana can choose these separately. Sometimes she needs practical support to send the message herself. Sometimes she wants to delegate the conversation but read the text first. Neither must signify strength or weakness; the question concerns the desired way of participating.

Not everything can be settled in advance. During the call, the workshop owner asks whether Svetlana can collect the desk tomorrow morning. Alina does not know. She can say the answer needs clarification or suggest a time to speak again. The pause preserves authority and need not obstruct help. It is risky to treat the absence of a quick answer as permission to make a promise the recipient will then have to fulfil.

Public confirmation of the result is a separate issue. A photograph of the delivered desk might be useful for a report to the group. Svetlana can accept a picture of the object while declining a picture of her room or face. If reporting requires wider disclosure, that condition should be known before accepting help. Where the agreement was unclear, it is better to acknowledge uncertainty and seek limited confirmation than to label privacy an obstacle to a good deed.

A recipient may prefer to delegate the whole conversation and not read every sentence. That is also a valid choice. It helps to define the topic, limits on disclosure, and a way to end the mandate. Autonomy is not measured by the number of messages sent personally. It consists in chosen representation reflecting the person’s wishes, without its scope changing unnoticed under a convenient appeal to saving time.

If a representative has already shared too much, future care does not undo it. The parties need to establish what was sent, to whom, and what correction is available. Perhaps the message can be deleted or its recipients asked not to share it; perhaps some effects cannot be reversed. Complete disappearance of the information should not be promised without grounds. Honest, limited repair preserves more participation than reassurance that the good purpose automatically made disclosure harmless.

A historical essay by Warren and Brandeis, *The Right to Privacy*, discusses making private life public. This is a limited comparison rather than present law: the resource offered through help and permission to publish deserve separate consideration. Primary text, 1890.

VII. Gratitude is not payment through obedience

Svetlana thanks Boris for the trip and asks him not to bring more things. These answers are compatible. Gratitude concerns the completed action; refusal concerns the next one. Combining them makes the recipient prove appreciation by accepting new decisions continually. Help gradually becomes a basis for controlling their time, space, or account of themselves.

Hearing that an offer did not fit can hurt a helper. There is no need to deny the feeling. Boris can say he is tired and cannot move more things. Alina can finish coordinating. But disappointment alone does not establish which duties Svetlana accepted. The parties need to return to the specific agreement and distinguish a fulfilled promise, a new request, and an expectation the other person did not know about.

Recipients, too, should avoid treating another person’s time as an endless supply. If Svetlana changes the delivery address, Boris may be unable to manage it. He need not accept every revision. Changing a purpose does not automatically cancel commitments already made; the parties discuss consequences and a feasible exit. A voice is preserved alongside responsibility for making one’s answer clear, rather than replacing it.

Relationships may remain emotionally unfinished. The help is complete, and the person likes the desk but does not want a friendly evening. Or she is grateful while unhappy that her private story reached the group. These complex answers need not become judgments of character. Correcting the publication and thanking someone for the transport can coexist. Solidarity is

better able to accommodate this compound answer when it does not require everyone to tell one happy story.

A group sometimes expects a particular expression of thanks: a photograph, a speech, or dinner together. If this was not a condition, the expectation cannot become a debt afterwards. If it was explicitly offered, the person should be able to evaluate it before accepting help. Even then, new sensitive information needs a separate decision. Taking part in a short report does not give indefinite permission to publish the recipient’s life.

A recipient may express gratitude differently from what a helper expected. A brief message does not necessarily show indifference; a long, warm reply does not necessarily mean agreement to continue. The next specific question can be discussed instead of reading hidden meaning into the response. This helps both parties avoid building plans on an emotional formula that answered a past action without promising future availability.

VIII. Examine the result against the agreed task

The desk arrives on time. For Boris, this completes his promise. Svetlana also needs to know whether she can work at it and whether it blocks the passage. Alina needs to close the arrangement with the donor. These questions are connected but different. One successful photograph does not confirm every aspect of the result. It helps to understand beforehand which action each party regards as finished and who needs a final answer.

Checking does not require supervision of the recipient’s later life. One can ask whether the delivered item fits and whether an agreed correction is needed. This does not automatically authorise visits to the flat, assessment of working habits, or inquiries about income from commissions. If a resource has conditions, they must be stated separately. Conditions cannot be added to a gift afterwards as an interest in what becomes of it.

Sometimes help does not deliver the expected result. The desk is too high, transport is late, or the evening never takes place. Examination begins with facts and the agreement’s scope. What was promised? What happened? What can the parties repair now? Failure does not establish the recipient’s ingratitude or the helper’s bad motive. The cause may remain unknown; limited repair can still be possible if participants retain the right to report the problem.

A good outcome may be modest. One item was found, one trip completed, and further help is unagreed. This does not show that Svetlana is free of every difficulty or that the group always knows how to help. It does show a specific possibility: someone received a resource while retaining a place in the decision. When help leaves the next question open, does not appropriate the story, and allows a new refusal, solidarity remains a relationship between participants rather than another person’s completed project about the recipient.

Checking may also reveal that the group’s stated purpose differed from the recipient’s. The evening collected many items, but there is still no workspace. An organisational success occurred in one sense while the agreed task remains open. Naming the difference is more useful than declaring the whole event a failure or treating the number of gifts as a sufficient answer. Different results need distinct names and next steps.

An ending includes releasing unnecessary expectations. Boris no longer stores an item for Svetlana; Alina is not waiting for her speech; Svetlana does not expect more trips. Any remaining promise is named separately. This ending may seem less celebratory than a shared rescue story, but it leaves people in a clear position. Each can continue the relationship on a new basis or limit it to gratitude for one completed task.

What this means in practice

In a small, safe situation, you can voluntarily discuss one form of help you offer or receive. Begin with a result rather than a ready collection of items: what needs to become possible for the person now? If the answer is unclear, agree on a brief clarification. An account of someone’s entire private life is unnecessary for one limited request.

Separate four points: the desired result, the available resource, the specific mandate, and information that may be shared. They need not coincide. A helper may offer less than required; a recipient may decline part of the offer. State the actual limit without a judgment of the other person’s character. Preserve the option of making no agreement at all.

Before acting, clarify the timing and boundary: who contacts a third party, who accepts a new condition, and does a message need to be read first? A few intelligible sentences are enough for a one-off friendly favour. If a new address, publication, or promise arises, return the question to the recipient rather than treating earlier acceptance as universal permission.

Afterwards, ask about one agreed result and a possible correction. Accepting a resource, liking it, and wanting the relationship to continue are different answers. Helpers also retain limits of time and energy. Revision does not guarantee another option will emerge, but it can establish where the task ends and what remains impossible.

This experiment is not intended for threats, coercion, or dependence where refusal could create danger. It can be declined or stopped without disclosing sensitive information. In such conditions, accessible safe support matters more than a joint exercise. For an ordinary small situation, one sign is enough: the person’s answer actually changes the scope of help, and gratitude does not become consent to everything that follows.

Key quotation

> *“Ready for experiment”.*

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Chapter VI. A fragment about a social settlement’s readiness to try and change its methods. Here, experimentation means revising a method of help; it does not permit trying actions on someone without their consent. Context.

Connections between traditions

Comparison	Similarity and essential boundary
Addams’s settlement work ↔ neighbourhood help	Methods can change through relationships with neighbours. A historical public role does not authorise a particular private publication.
Solidarity ↔ choosing one’s own purpose	Shared resources can expand the possibility of action. The recipient retains the right to decline the proposed method.
Attentive listening ↔ participation in decisions	An answer needs consideration. Even a recognised report does not replace consent to an action.
Representation ↔ assistance	Both can ease an approach. Providing a contact, speaking in someone’s name, and promising for them need different authority.
Warren and Brandeis’s historical argument ↔ publication limits	Private disclosure needs separate consideration. The 1890 essay does not establish contemporary rights or predict a particular publication’s effects.
Gratitude ↔ responsibility for an agreement	A completed action can be acknowledged while a new one is refused. Neither gratitude nor revision automatically cancels specific commitments.

Primary sources and research

1. Jane Addams. Twenty Years at Hull-House; with Autobiographical Notes. The 1910 book in the Macmillan 1912 version. Title information, preface, and a selected continuous Chapter VI passage on motives, flexibility, and neighbourhood relationships were read; a following Chapter VII passage was also read during preparation. The whole book is not claimed as read. Both brief fragments come from Chapter VI. Historical authorial self-account, without proving the effectiveness of contemporary programmes; rights across jurisdictions remain undetermined.

2. Samuel D. Warren, Louis D. Brandeis. The Right to Privacy (1890). The opening problem statement and a selected continuous argument about disclosure and consent were read. A brief historical legal paraphrase is used, with no direct quotations from this work here. Contemporary legislation, removal rights, and the safety of a particular publication are not asserted.

Tags

solidarity, help, recipient voice, Jane Addams, Hull-House, neighbourhood, autonomy, consent, right to refuse, mandate, representation, assistance, resources, purpose, revision, gratitude, privacy, publication, authority, limits of help, participation, mutual interests, agreement, public life, private life, responsibility, result, experiment, mutual aid, dignity, listening, freedom of choice

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, unity across traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.