Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

In Our Home

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Abstract

Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people, which is sometimes characterized by physical violence.

Conflict can be experienced in variouss places such as home, school, work place, communities, states and countries etc. Conflict is a part of life and we cannot avoid it.

When there is a clash of interest, idea, value or action, conflict always results. Conflict occurs as a reduction of one motivating stimulus which coincides as a rise in another stimulus.

There are various types and modes of conflicts. This paper will focus on family or home conflict and discuss the effects of violent conflict resolution in our homes. There is a saying that charity begins at home. Our families play vital roles in our lives.

A violent way of resolving conflicts always brings destruction. Parents that use violent means in resolving their conflicts are teaching their children the same way. As the child becomes a leader in school, workplace or communities, he/she will always resort in using violent means in settling conflicts except when told otherwise. Anger and pride are some of the contributing factors to conflict. Anger management is very important in resolving conflict. It is generally believed that anger is part of human nature and we shall endeavor to manage it properly in order to settle our differences.

Once there is a clash of interest among group or individuals, it is pertinent for us to handle this issue carefully before it will result to conflict. In situations where conflicts have occurred, it is very important that the parties involved try to reach a compromise by providing opportunities to satisfy everyone's need. It may seems very difficult to do this but we can all "agree to disagree", so that we can reach a temporary solution. Sometimes, this doesn't guarantee conflict resolution but an understanding of the situation maybe reached.

Dialoguing is very important here as well. Parties involved in conflict should sit together and iron out their differences. When dialoguing, it is very important to avoid being biased. Try to learn the needs of each other. Listening is also very vital. Negotiating parties try to reach an agreement by consensus and not by force.

Non-violent method of resolving any conflict achieves the best result and is the best way of resolving conflict.

CONFLICT

Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people, which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. Rummel (1976) published work on conflict and the war, Wayne (1993) did the work on resolving conflict, and Volpe (1996) wrote the effects of domestic violence on children and adolescent.

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result as a reduction of one motivating stimulus which occurs as a rise in another stimulus.

Conflict is a part of life. Conflict is inevitable. Some people think that conflict is bad and should be avoided. We cannot avoid having conflicts. We have different viewpoints on issues and ideas. Our ideas will differ with other people's viewpoints and this may result in conflict. In a larger context, if we look at what is happening around the world today, we will find out that the majority of the conflict occurs as a result of clash of interest or opposing positions on issues. Currently Iran is having a problem with international communities on the issue of its nuclear program. Iran believes that its project is for peaceful process while the international communities think that Iran has a hidden agenda to develop nuclear weapons. Handling and resolving conflict in a proper way are needed. Understanding how to manage or resolve conflict is very important.

There are various types and modes of conflicts. This paper discusses family or home conflict and its resolutions. There is a saying that charity begins at home. Our family plays vital roles in our lives. It is the bedrock of all virtues.

Domestic violence and its effect on our children

Nowadays domestic violence is rampant in the society. Straus & Gelles (1990) did the survey of 600 American families. Between 53% and 70% of these families, husband frequently assaulted their wives and their children. World wide, there has been an increase in the number of domestic violence. Domestic violence includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse, Ganley (1989). Exposure to this form of domestic violence has considerable potential to be perceived as life threatening by those victims. It can leave them a sense of vulnerability, helplessness and in extreme cases of horror. Physical abuse refers to any behavior that involves the intentional use of force against the body of another person that risks physical injury, harm or pain, Dutton (1992). Children are the most vulnerable to violence in any family. Over three million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence every year, Carlson (1984).

Violence at home has great consequence on each person in the home. The use of violence at home in resolving conflict, has adverse effect on children in their lives. Violence caused physical, psychological and emotional effects. More than half of the school-age children in domestic violence shelters showed clinical level of anxiety or post traumatic stress disorder, Graham-Bermann (1994). Violence is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Violence affects every person.

Children from violent homes encounter problems in school. They have difficulties in concentrating on their studies which result in poor performance. They prefer to stay outside of their home rather than going home. They run the risk of becoming delinquents, substance abusers, or school drop-outs. They have difficulties in their relationship with others.

In homes where violence is used in resolving conflict, children emulate this idea and apply the same method in resolving their problems. These children are likely to become abusers or victims of abuse. At slightest provocation from their peers, these children will result in fighting. During fighting they are likely to suffer injury or inflict injury on their fellow children.

When children raised under domestic violence grow up, they will continue to use violence in resolving problems. If the child becomes a leader or a position in power, he/she will be applying violence in resolving conflict every time.

Techniques in Non-violent conflicts resolution

Peace is important for us to live together on earth. We should all seek peace in ensuring a better world and a world free of crisis. Peace begins with the individual. It begins at home, with how we live our lives, how we relate to others and how we handle conflicts. Conflicts if not properly managed or resolved, leads to crisis or war. Conflict resolution is working toward peace, with principles and tools that are universally applicable at every level, between individuals, families, communities and nations.

Conflict is a part of life. Proper resolution should ensure the peace in our homes and the world at large.

Non-violent communication in conflict resolution: Non-violent communication (NVC) is a process developed by Rosenberg and Gandhi (2003). NVC guides us to reframe how we express ourselves and hear others by focusing our consciousness on what we are observing, feeling, needing, and requesting. The process of NVC encourages us to focus on what we and others are observing, how and why we are feeling, what our underlying needs are, and what each of us would like to have happened. These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we make when we respond to others. Communication skill is extremely important in resolving conflict. We should always watch the words we use when resolving conflict. Do not use words that may cause more conflict.

NVC makes us feel responsible for our actions. When we express our needs clearly, we avoid projecting our feeling onto others. When we discuss opposing views on any issue, we communicate in a peaceful manner, focus on the issue and avoid any personal attack. We listen to the other side with sincerity, and voice our opinion if we disagree.

Communicative skills (attentive listening, assertive statement and clear opinion) are essential to the success of non-violent conflict resolution.

Empathy: This is the ability to put us in the place of the opponent and understand their feelings, ideas and actions. With this technique, we try to put our opponent interest first. If everyone does this, the conflict will be resolved amicably.

Dialogue: Dialoguing is very important in resolving conflict. Dialoguing is talking to and listening to between the opposing parties. This is the period when each party tries to say what he/she feels about the dispute. During the dialoguing, it is very important to be honest and truthful. Do not say anything that might increase tension or add to the conflict. Do not apportion blame, point fingers, or call each other names. This is not a debate. In a debate there is always a winning side. So avoid turning dialogue into a debate. And avoid being defensive. Appropriate time should be set to make sure that both parties agree to this time frame.

Also allow each other to express his/her feeling and to explain vividly his perception on the issue. Do not hide anything that may bring more conflict in future. Try to table unrelated issues and discuss them later. And while the other party is talking, it is important that we listen and do not criticize.

It does not matter if agreement is reached on the first day or other days. What matters is that there is a progress toward peace. This progress should continue until the peace is achieved. Therefore, do not force each other to agree on the time frame. Allow each other more time to discuss and to agree on the final issue.

The environment is important for each other to express genuine feelings and thus leads to an opportunity for mutual agreement.

Most importantly, do not have a close mind on any issue believing that we are always right. Even when we think we are right, try to stay calm. Otherwise, it annoys or infuriates our opponent. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion about issues and that we may not be able to change it. Don't overlook the fact that each person in a conflict discussion has mixed feelings. Never say the word "You are lying". People will not be happy when they are accused of lying. It may ignite more anger. Always control motions while dialoguing.

During dialoguing, understanding the conflict will be ensured when handled properly and a better resolution of the conflict will be achieved.

Listening: Listening is to pay close attention to what others are saying. It is vital in conflict resolution. Do not interrupt when the other party is talking even when we know that the person is not saying the right thing. Allow him or her to complete the description of the matter. As we have different viewpoints, then we use common sense to voice our opinions. Do not use words that will create more conflict. Use words such as "I think" or "I suggest" will have better chance of success.

While listening to the other party, we will be able to understand the conflict in a better way and be able to identify our own fault and mistakes.

Anger management: Anger is a feeling of displeasure or hostility, along with an urge to act upon the feeling, and along with an implication that one has been wronged. Anger emerges from a pattern of experiencing unmet needs, Confer (1989). Anger management is important in resolving conflict. We should try to control our emotions. Anger is a human behavior and cannot be avoided in our lives. We are bound to be angry when someone offends us or when things are not moving well. Therefore to achieve a better conflict resolution, it is important to manage our anger properly. Parents should not express their anger on their children. If they do, children will behave the same way because they learn from the parents. Anger brings hatred. Do not overreact when we are angry.

Negotiation: Negotiation is the process of two individuals or groups reaching agreements about differing needs or ideas. This is done without the third party. The parties involved in conflict, are trying to reach an agreement on how their conflict will be resolved. An enable environment should be created for negotiation. The two styles of negotiation, competitive and cooperative, are commonly recognized. Most negotiations move back and forth between the two styles depending on the situation. It is important that the negotiators try to understand each other by listening and respect each other. Negotiation is a difficult process in resolving conflict because each side has his/her own needs. It is not easy to change one's opinion. But in other to achieve peace with each other, it is very important to create an opportunity to consider everyone's need.

Mediation: It is a situation in which both parties agree to take part in a structured settlement process through the guidance of a neutral expert (mediator). It is also regarded as an alternative to dispute resolution. It aims to assist two or more disputants in reaching an agreement. In mediation, agreement may not be reached. The mediator should not impose an agreement on the parties involved. Intervention of a mediator should be regarded as the last resort to conflict resolution. This arises when the parties involved could not reach an agreement between themselves. Mediation is a communication process that helps to rebuild trust among the opposing parties.

Mediators should be well trained in handling and resolving conflict. Mediators should apply the best techniques and/or skills in resolving conflicts. Every conflict has a different resolution. Mediators should not be biased or emotionally attached to a particular person or a group. When we have feelings for a particular person involved in the conflict, it is for our best interest not to mediate for him/her. Try to look at both parties equally. Give them equal chances in telling their stories. Both parties should avoid using inflammatory statements that might ignite anger. Mediators should listen carefully to both side of the story. Mediators should not apply blame on any person. If they must place blame, they must handle it with care.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Forgiveness is the mental, emotional or spiritual process of ceasing to feel resentment or anger toward another person for a perceived offence, difference or mistake, or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. After a proper agreement has been reached, it is important to forgive one another. Do not wait for an apology from the other side. If the person does not apologize, after the conflict has been resolved, just let the matter go. Holding no grudge will free you and allow you to move on with your life.

Reconciliation is the restoration of peaceful or amicable relations between two individuals who were previously in conflict with each other.

Total reconciliation is also very important in achieving peace. After the conflict is resolved, both parties decided to go their separate ways. In the case of a husband and a wife, they will seek for divorce after the conflict is resolved. Even though they have forgiven each other, they will cease to be friends or partners. Each time they see their friends or their spouse, it reminds them of the past. Yes, it is agreed that one can forgive and not forget. This is why is important to reconcile and try to put the past behind us. We all make mistakes and nobody is perfect. There will never be a perfect relationship or friendship. Even relationship between God and Man is not perfect, as a mortal man will always err. It is important we recognize our mistakes and ask for forgiveness and try to reconcile.

Steps in resolving conflict at home

Our family is the main source at which we derive our social values and virtue. Parents have important roles to play in the upbringing of their children. If a peaceful environment is not created in raising children, the

children will grow up not being responsible. The use of violence in resolving conflict at home has an effect on the upbringing of children. Children are known to emulate the negative things faster than the good things. So parents should be very careful in handling of conflicts at home. Parents should teach their children how to resolving conflict amicably without violence and they should live by example. If children are not taught at home, they may learn the negative things from their peers. Children learn how to live by observing their surroundings. Parents should play an active role in resolving conflicts at home. We must handle violence and conflicts seen by our children in the peaceful manner using many of the techniques discussed in this paper. We are serving as good role models for our children for conflict resolution.

Parents should avoid the use of abusive words on their children when they err. When a child makes mistakes or misbehave, try to correct their mistakes and let them know that what they are doing is wrong. Do not use abusive words or calling children names. Negative words may have effects on our child. Therefore avoid using them.

Do not use beating, starving, hard punishment or any other physical abuses on our children. The measure we place on our child may result in making him/her stronger or more rebellious. Therefore, he or she will no longer regard it as a punishment but as a norm in the family. This has a very bad effect on a child upbringing. The child no longer fears any forms of hard punishment and it will grow up using the same abuses on others when there is a conflict.

Do not turn our back on your child because of his or her mistakes. Always create an avenue for talking to our child. We should do it when we think he or she is willingly to listen. Don't force him or her to listen to us. Talk to him or her early in the morning whenever he or she misbehaves. He or she will be more attentive in the morning and be able to absorb whatever we told him/her. Care must also be used here not to make him/her think we are disturbing his/her sleep. Give our child good reasons why he/she should not continue to misbehave. One reason is it will make them irresponsible in the society. Conflict may lead to fighting and then they may end up in jail or even get killed. That bad attitude is not good. Do not be too judgmental on him or her. Allow your child to present his/her viewpoint, why the conflict happened. Put the child's age and developmental level into consideration when admonishing him or her.

Handle anger properly whenever our child behaves badly. Don't be furious. He or she may misinterpret our anger. Always admonish our child with compassion.

Study our children and understand their emotion. Try to establish a good relationship with them. This will enable us to know when the child is feeling bad and when the child is emotionally disturbed. Allow them some quality time to play and make them to be responsible. Provide children the opportunity to talk and express their opinions. Pay attention to what they are saying.

Educate children to use non-violent conflict approach in conflict resolution. Parents and community leaders should also champion non-violent conflict resolution approach. Always promote non-violent conflict resolution at home rather than fighting.

It is important to monitor what our child watches on television. Television viewing has significant effect on the child's behavior. Many media shows and movies contain violence. It is not healthy for our children. They may emulate that easily as a way to resolve conflict.

Conclusion

Violence is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Violence should not be used as a way to resolve conflict. It is a known fact that using violence will not yield a good result. Conflict cannot be avoided in our lives.

Parents should always adopt non-violent approach in resolving conflict at home. When violence is used in resolving conflict, children are the most vulnerable. Children are the tomorrow leaders and they should be educated on how to use non-violent techniques in resolving conflicts.

The following non-violent techniques: Non-violent communication, dialogue, mediation, forgiveness and reconciliation, should be properly applied in resolving conflict.

If every family applies non-violent approach in resolving conflict, our world will be much a better place to live. Of course this is not easy to achieve. But we are striving to be successful. The children are growing up and use the non-violent techniques to resolve their conflicts. They will become tomorrow's leaders. Then we will have a peaceful world.

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