Orientation Course on

Peer Mediation

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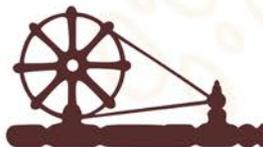
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Introduction of the Course

The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force…Thousands, indeed tens of thousands; depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. ..Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and reawakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace. – Mahatma Gandhi, Hind Swaraj

Here Mahatma Gandhi pertinently talks of how quarrels of individuals and families get resolved through the force of love, reconciliation and forgiveness. In fact, notwithstanding our differences, in majority of the cases we get out of our disputes to rekindle our relationships.

The thrust hence should be to find ways and means on how to resolve disputes through a win-win solution. To start with all efforts should be made to directly try to resolve the dispute amicably. In case it fails, the next best option would be to invite someone whom both the disputing parties trust and have faith to come and help in bringing an end to the differences without compromising anyone's dignity. This third person is called a mediator.

In our educational institutions, often we find situations when two colleagues get into a situation of conflict. In many cases, they are able to resolve their differences within themselves. But there may be situations where a third person intervention is needed. It could be a teacher, the administration or even their common friends. When the common friend is called upon to help in resolving the differences, the common friend is essentially a peer mediator.

Peer mediation can be a powerful inbuilt mechanism of constructive conflict resolution in any educational settings- whether in schools or colleges. This course initiated by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti will take you through a journey to develop finer skills in peer mediation. It would cover the types of conflicts in educational settings, introduce peer mediation, its benefits and the skills required to be an effective peer mediator.

It would be useful for students, teachers and management alike as it is aimed to promote the philosophy of peer mediation in the overall architecture of conflict resolution in educational institutions.

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Unit 1.1 MEANING OF CONFLICTS

Conflicts are natural processes. They occur on a daily basis, and are unavoidable situations faced by everyone. Conflicts not only take place among the individuals but also within oneself. Conflicts are the differences in expression of opinions, viewpoints, ways of working and understanding, striving to achieve the same goals in different ways, etc. Any kind of human interaction incorporates conflicts. When a teacher tries to put forth some concepts in classrooms, there are differences in the meaning grasped by the students. These differing thought processes may lead to situations wherein conflicts arise. The conflicts may sometimes result in better comprehension or at other times, may lead to rifts. However, in each circumstance, it's important to address the conflicts and devise effective ways to overcome such events. "*Conflicts simply denote incompatibility of needs, desires, goals, wants, temperaments, attitudes and values, which means that the two existing needs, goals or desires of individual or different groups could not be fulfilled simultaneously*".

For developing deeper and critical understanding of conflicts and their resolution, it would be pertinent to look at some important elements. Even though they are significant, we often miss them in situations of conflicts thinking that these are trivia or outside our frame of thought. We share these elements for your reflection on how important these are in our endeavour to understand and resolve conflicts.

1. As we all know that no two human beings are the same nor are their thought process or their perspectives. We have to remember that even though we may have some common characteristics, we are essentially different. Much of the disputes arise due to differences in our perception. Also we must keep in mind that same techniques of conflict resolution will not work for all alike due to these differences.

2. We also need to keep in mind that our own outlook, thoughts and perspectives keep on changing from time to time and in different situations. This has an impact on the way to see conflicts and how we try to handle these.

3. When we look at the entire gamut of human interactions and human relationships, we will realize that these interactions and relationships are very complex in nature. We will find that these are multi-layered and multi-dimensional. These interactions are also unpredictable as these involve two different individuals who are through a process of constant change themselves. In such a situation, it is difficult to have any single fixed framework of resolution of conflict.

4. We have to realize that in situations of conflict, there is an atmosphere of negative energy, negative perception, negative behavior and dysfunctional communication ecosystem. Also there is involvement of intense emotions, issues of

intentions of the conflict parties, attitudes which are inconsistent and problems of stereotypes. The system becomes dysfunctional, there is chaos and turmoil.

5. As in conflicts there is intersection of emotional issues, intentionality, interests, self-aggrandizement, identity, the history and form of the relationship between the conflict parties; we must realize that in most occasions the actual reason of the conflict is beneath the surface. It is possible that the conflicting parties may be fighting over trivia or superficial issues and they are unable to unearth the real reasons of the conflict or are not conscious of these underlying concerns. It is critical to discern on the actual meaning of the conflict, what it means to each of the conflicting parties, the reasons of why and how they got into the conflict situation.

6. Many times when a conflict has taken chronic proportion or it has developed into a situation which has become difficult, thinking starts to sink in that it could be an uphill task to resolve it. In order to resolve such issues it would need greater effort to change and transform. It is also here we could find that there could be considerable resistance for any perceptible change which could contribute towards the resolution of the conflict.

7. We must realize that there are issues and sub-issues in conflicts. It is important to keep in mind that each of these issues and sub-issues are important even though some of them would seem to be insignificant. So any change in any of these issues or sub-issues could help in transformation of the scenario either in a small way or even towards finding a major solution to the conflict.

8. We should realize that in situations of conflicts, there could be different pathways in which these could be resolved. It is upon the conflicting parties on how they would act, their attitudes, behavior and approaches. There could be a scenario when even if the conflicting parties get into the negotiation table, due to some reason or the other, goes back to a situation of impasse and more hostility. In the second scenario, the conflicting parties through the process of dialogue move towards resolution, they collaborate together to find solution to their dispute. In yet another scenario, the conflicting parties goes through a process of self-realization, they start looking at the conflict as an opportunity to learn and transformation. Hence, we must realize that every conflict gives an opportunity to people to express and act on how they would like the situation to evolve-whether there would resolution and transformation or continuation of the impasse.

9. If we go back to the last conflict situation in which we were involved, we would realize how conflicts can give us the opportunity and space to hone our skills and awareness on how to respond to our opponents and difficult scenario. As conflicts are bound to come in our life, we must try to ensure on how each of these conflict situations becomes a significant source of learning, enhancement of wisdom and of course further improvement. Here we want to point out that conflicts should offer

opportunities to learn not just for individuals but also for systems and institutions. It will help in responding to such conflicts more constructively in the future.

10. In most of the situations, we should realize that conflicting parties want resolution of their disputes. No one wants a conflict situation to linger on as it is stressful and leads to more complex problems. When conflicting parties find a safe space to dialogue and reconcile their differences, it is likely they would be more flexible, open, will be attuned to managing their emotions, feelings, intentions and attitudes.

To summarize it can be underlined that since each person is different and their thoughts and perspectives are also different, every conflict that an individual or institution confronts with will be different. Also as in any conflict situations, scenarios change constantly and are fluid, there cannot be any set framework or formula on how to resolve a particular conflict. The best way to constructively handle a conflict situation is to constantly work to hone one's conflict competencies, develop broad and flexible range of techniques on how to respond to a particular situation. It is also critical that we develop competencies to decipher the underlying reasons of the conflict and enhance our abilities to probe beneath the superficial issues of the conflict. Finally, the pathway to resolution of any conflict depends on the individual's attitude, self-awareness, intention, competencies in using nonviolent communication and use of altruistic tendencies like empathy, compassion and kindness.

Educational institutions are an important part of society. Therein teachers and students mingle together, who come from a wide range of backgrounds, be it social, political, economical, cultural, educational, etc. Each background has certain beliefs and views to which people adhere to and adapt accordingly. However, in places like schools or colleges these varied backgrounds are diminished for the sake of better achievement, prosperity, and growth of the students. Instead of isolating oneself, students and teachers interact, communicate, and construct knowledge by promoting discourse and discussion within the classrooms and outside. Even then, many times the differences in beliefs, perspectives, views and goals of the individuals may give rise to conflicting situations. Conflicts come into picture as a result of the changing worldviews, aspirations and goals, lifestyles, etc. Peoples' likes and dislikes, acceptance and negligence, etc. cause conflicts. We come across such situations in schools, colleges and classrooms, where there are differences between teachers- teachers, students- students and teacher- students. These differences are expressed in a number of ways while proceeding to achieve the goals. It's always recommended that for a successful running of the system, the differences however, have to be dealt effectively and constructively.

Since conflicts are definite to occur on a daily basis, the key point is to handle these conflicting events in an appropriate manner. Pain and rifts have to be reduced to a

minimum, which are a result of these events. Teachers usually frame out a list of do's and don'ts for the students to maintain peace, but the question arises 'how effective or comprehensive is this list?' or whether such a list directed to students has actually helped in overcoming the conflicts and managing its consequences! Conflicts can give pain, a lot of energy is expended in such situations of conflicts, and people move apart, miscommunication occurs or even communication ceases to exist, and the peaceful atmosphere is disrupted. Conflicts can also lead to constructive behaviour in the classrooms, more interaction and healthy competition, better discourse, etc. This implies that conflict in itself is not disruptive or constructive, but its consequences are either positive or negative. The diversity observed in the classrooms requires that contradictory views lead to building of constructive ideas, help in addressing the underlying problems, motivate the learners to participate and together put forth solutions. In this way, conflict has positive consequences by utilizing the differences which are bound to exist in a classroom. Conflicts become a nuisance when dealt in improper ways. This will lead to lower productivity or achievement of the students, more differences are created and inappropriate or disruptive behaviors can be seen in the students. In both cases, the educators and teachers have to act responsibly and mediate the strategies of resolving conflicts to achieve better outcomes.

Classroom Situations

Have you ever come across the following situations in your classrooms-?

1)   Students physically fighting among themselves on reasons unknown to you as a teacher.
2)   Students or teacher phone rings and answering it during the classroom learning process
3)   Students questioning your marking pattern in their answer books.
4)   Competing ideas arising on certain political, social or cultural issues, etc.

All the above mentioned situations lead to conflicts in the classroom. The teachers and students need to skillfully deal accordingly in each of these conflict situations to resolve them.

1.2 TYPES OF CONFLICTS

Conflicts are of different types depending on the individuals involved.

1)   Intrapersonal conflicts
2)   Interpersonal conflicts
3)   Intragroup conflicts
4)   Intergroup conflicts

1.   **Intrapersonal Conflicts:** Conflicts within an individual are termed as Intrapersonal conflicts. Within an individual simply implies that the person finds himself/ herself in situations where he/ she is not able to decide between two or more goals. "Should I or should I not?" "This or that?" etc. are some questions faced by individual during intrapersonal conflicts. Struggling between "what I want to do" and "what I should do" is also another example. Moral and ethical decisions are faced with intrapersonal conflicts at times. Examples- (a) Knowing and feeling bad about missing the next morning class, but still staying awake on social media late at night. (b) Whether to work a little harder and do the assignment yourself or copy it from a friend's notes. (c) Teacher is tired of strenuous work and coming to class just for presence and not teaching the students.

Intrapersonal conflicts include three events of- *approach- approach conflict, avoidance- avoidance conflict,* and *approach- avoidance conflict* (NCERT, 2010).

2.   **Interpersonal Conflicts:** Conflicts arising between the individuals as a result of incompatibility of their own attitudes, values, and aspirations. However, it is important to develop meaningful relationships to overcome interpersonal differences or conflicts. Asking questions, listening, and being compassionate towards others are all skills that need to be learned and practiced. Nelson-Jones (1990) indicates that interpersonal conflict is a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other.
Examples of interpersonal conflicts in schools- (a) When two teachers distrust each other's motives, dislike one another or for some other reason cannot get along. (b) Two students fighting and teasing each other with inappropriate names. (c) Student X moved back and hit student Y accidentally, and immediately student Y hit him back, causing disruption of discipline.

3.   **Intragroup Conflicts:** This type of conflict arises when individuals think themselves belonging to the same group. This is however, a complicated conflict to identify, because of all the types of conflict; students have the most difficulty identifying subgroups within a larger group. Intragroup conflicts may affect the whole team work as each member of the allotted team work is related to each

other. *Thus, having any discrepancies in the single group will affect the whole project. These conflicts may become beneficial when handled mutually by understanding the perspective of each member, and finding out the best solution by both the perspectives.* (Jordan & Truth, 2004). This occurred mainly due to lack of cooperation, poor accountability and responsibility among committee members, and neglect or ignorance of duties and instructions. In turn, this often affected overall efforts to achieve the goals set by the school administration. Such types of conflicts are even related to poor leadership skills. Negative attitudes on the part of the head or chairperson could lead to intragroup conflicts. Examples- (a) Students are not paying attention to class monitor. (b) Head of the school dissatisfied with the work of various committee coordinators. (c) Teachers arguing on the measures to be taken to punish students for indiscipline.

4.   **Intergroup Conflicts:** Strong interdependency may sometimes lead to such intergroup conflicts. This type of conflict occurs between two or more groups of individuals. The underlying reason can be competition among the groups. There may result in rivalries between the groups due to the limits set by each group for other groups. Examples- (a) Students are allotted in different teams to build a project for participating in a competition. (b) Superiors trying to control the subordinates in the organisation. (c) Teachers adhering to one teaching method but students wish to explore learning through other methods as well.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR IN CONFLICTS

The behaviour of both the teachers and the students is explicit in the conflict process. Conflicts refer to a process or course of events taking place which may lead to personal or social growth and development. Avoiding conflicts is not the key to progress. When such conflicting events are bound to occur, it becomes extremely important to analyze the attitudes and behavior of the participants of conflicts. The behaviour analysis simply helps you to overcome and resolve the conflicts in a better manner. What kind of behaviours will be exhibited by both the teachers and students in the classroom post conflict management strategies are also important. Shahmohammadi (2014) indicated the conflicting attitudes of students that include a wide range of unacceptable behaviors such as lack of classroom participation, causing and disrupting peers and situations of violence (e.g., verbal: offending peers; and physical: destroying school facilities and equipment, as well as peer materials). Wheldall and Merret (1988), for example, asked teachers to identify behaviors that disturbed teachers the most. These were "pupils talking out of turn," "pupils hindering other children," and "out-of-seat behavior". Disruptive behavior is evident during conflicts. Destructive behaviour refers to creating disturbances in the classroom both for teachers as well as other students. Disciplinary problems are also faced by teachers on a daily basis in the

classrooms. Communication is hindered. Disrespect in the classrooms is a common behavior nowadays. Students feeling sleepy or bored during the lectures are also usually encountered by the teachers. Late attendance or not coming to the class is also a regular phenomenon. Behaviors like dragging a chair or table during teaching, talking to other students, playing games on mobiles, throwing things at others, etc are indicative of a student's disruptive behavior. Verbal abuse, temper burst in class and violence to teachers and other pupils are some more examples. Nasty insults and abusive or disruptive jokes, student's anger and frustration, unnecessary complaints, high expectations/ambitions, prejudices, intolerance etc. are also other common behaviors depicted by students in a conflict.

However, in all the aforementioned behaviours shown by the students towards other students or teachers, cannot be ignored. These behaviours need to be checked accordingly with appropriate strategies of conflict management. The teachers and administrators have to play a significant role in these circumstances. The skills and styles of teachers in dealing with disruptive behaviour are of utmost importance. As mentioned, each behaviour and attitude shown by the student in conflicts will disturb the teaching- learning process to a large extent. So, a huge responsibility lies with the teacher to confront the students' disruptive behaviour in appropriate ways. Designing lessons in such a way that they keep the students engaged and practically active to increase their participation can be done. Using positive reinforcements, encouragement and motivation to students, defining rules in the beginning of the class, etc. can help to challenge the conflicts. It has been found that unanimous decisions of the teachers' group on managing classroom conflicts can help in bringing positive outcomes. An example of a teacher talking to students privately to understand why they are late or not attending the class can also help. Providing feedback to students on a regular basis is very important. Role playing by students to understand different cultures, opinions and perspectives will definitely help to avoid the destructive behaviors in the students. It is important to note here that many of such inappropriate behaviour of students are a result of lack of moral and ethical values, so it becomes extremely relevant for the teacher to generate moral sensitivity and incorporate values- based education in classrooms. Recognition and addressing the conflicting behaviour and situation is another step that can help teachers. Don't ignore or leave the conflicts unnoticed! Face them with the right strategies. Active learning methods, holding discussions, interactive learning, communication, etc. need to be adopted. Teachers' confidence, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence have been found to manage disruptive behaviours of the students effectively. Teachers' role to maintain a successful and motivating educational environment which removes the students out of anxiety, fear and improper behaviours, can promote effective learning in schools. The Majority of students' unwanted behavior in the classrooms towards teachers is a result of boring, or unattractive classroom teaching. New methods of teaching to make the students active learners, listening to their problems attentively, becoming good role

models themselves are some essential skills of teachers in facing and overcoming behavioral problems of students. Generating positivity in the classrooms, not being too strict, not considering oneself as most superior, promoting culture of interaction and healthy competition, respecting identity of students, addressing their psychological, social and emotional needs are important. An important aspect is Emotional intelligence (EI). Researchers have found that teachers who tend to have higher levels of EI use less obliging, dominating, and avoiding strategies for classroom conflict management. Positive classroom relationships are promoted by emotionally intelligent teachers. How these skills and strategies can be employed in the classrooms will be dealt in the next unit.

1.4   CONFLICT TREE ANALYSIS AND SOURCES OF CONFLICTS

Understanding conflicts is not an easy task for the stakeholders of education system. A better and in-depth understanding of conflicts is pre- requisite for adoption of effective conflict resolution strategies. Analyzing and constructively designing methods for conflict resolution is one way of overcoming the harmful effects of conflicts. But how do we understand and analyse the conflicts? This leads to the concept of conflict tree analysis, wherein addressing the conflicts is done in an explicit manner. The conflict tree analysis is confrontation of conflicts in a more comprehensive way by sorting the events of the conflicts in three major categories- causes, core problems, and effects, each symbolized by the roots, trunk and the branches of a simple tree, respectively. As a teacher, if you use the conflict tree analysis to understand any kind of conflict in the classrooms or outside it, you may be better able to employ the conflict resolution strategies effectively.

Branches- 'Effects'

Trunk- 'Core Problem'

Roots- 'Causes'
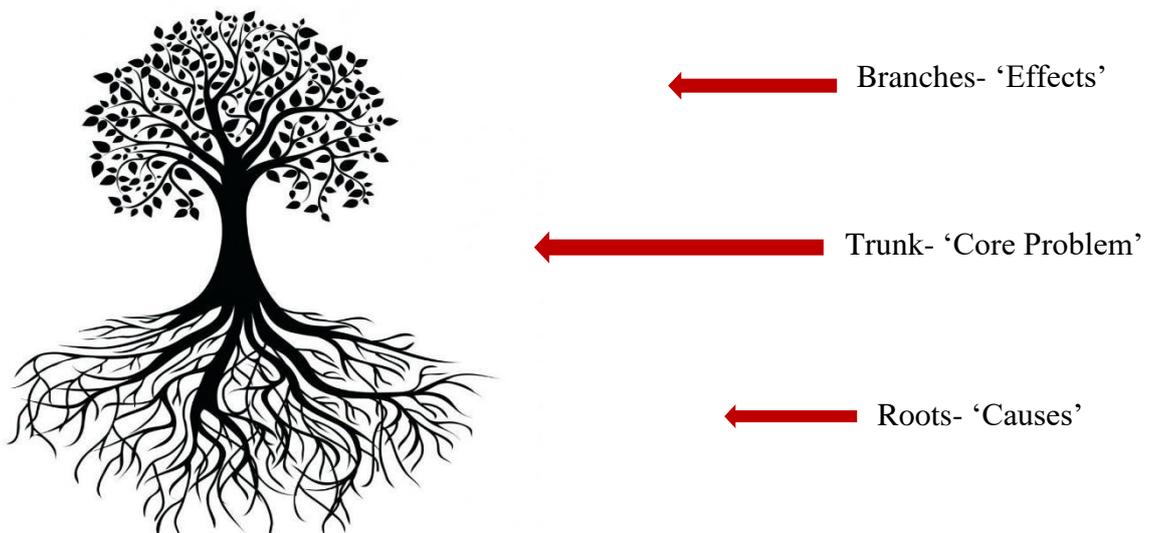
Conflict Tree Analysis
(Adapted from Source: Simon Fisher et al. (2000))

This kind of analysis helps in identifying the major causes of any conflict, addressing the core problems and the consequences or effects of such conflicts. Let's take an example of a classroom situation to understand this concept. Student A comes to the class usually late and almost gets punished on a daily basis for not complying to the rules. At times, he could be found sitting alone during recess and taking his meals. When asked he says he doesn't feel like eating and has the food in his bag. He is sometimes even seen fighting with other students in the class. The grades have decreased and participation in the classroom discussions is also not seen. The teachers scold him, ask him to focus and give him more exercises to practice at home. Failing to do so, he is often seen getting punished. Poor performance and ultimately low achievement scores at the end of the year- session are observed.

Now any teacher in this situation will try to use some measures to help the child perform better in the class. As aforementioned, giving more work, giving directions to the student, citing examples of good performers of the class, comparing him to his siblings, etc. But is this the actual conflict that the student was facing? Were the teachers taking the appropriate steps to help the student? This can only be understood once analysis of the conflicting situation is done accordingly. The core problem is the behaviour of the student which includes- not coming on time, being aggressive, poor performance, avoiding lunch in recess, etc. The effects observed were punishment by teachers, low scores on achievement, fighting with others, poor health, etc. But what were the root causes in this conflicting situation? An in depth information is required to identify the root causes. Surprisingly, the student was brought into confidence and effective communication revealed that both the parents of the student have started working overtime and the care and concern received earlier by the child at home has lessened to a large extent. The negligence of the child's needs and not giving appropriate attention to him by his parents has created a sense of loneliness in the child. As a result, he has exhibited such behaviour which has led to conflicts within himself and also with other students and teachers. It was even found that the student stopped bringing lunch to the school and lied about it. Further analysis revealed that because parents couldn't get time to prepare meal for him on time so his health deteriorated. The frustration was build up in the child and his interest in studies was lost because of lack of attention and time devoted to him by the parents.

When such a deep analysis of the situation was done, key factors came into picture, and the teacher arranged for a meeting with the student's parents and the problem was thereby resolved.

This is how any conflict tree analysis will work in gaining information about the causes of a conflict, and challenging the conflict problems with decisive strategies in order to avoid deleterious effects.

In any classroom situation, it's more likely that the root causes of a conflict may be ignored and greater emphasis is on the problems and its consequences. The teachers usually find themselves facing the problems on a daily basis and taking immediate action to overcome the conflicts. We are more engrossed in identifying and dealing with the problems instead of acknowledging the underlying causes of it. The causes may be psychological, social, emotional, economical, cultural, political, etc. However, if the causes are not checked and addressed on time, the same conflicts may arise in different forms and varying degrees all the time. Even the best resolution strategies may not work effectively if the causes are not identified in time. Tracing back the root causes and factors responsible in each conflict is essential, in order to develop a peaceful learning environment.

SOURCES OF CONFLICTS

Deep down each conflict, a number of root causes and underlying precursors can be found. Possible sources of conflicts are- poor communication, competition among the individuals, differences in perceptions, incompatible goals, cultural differences, scarcity of resources, social or organisational structures, etc. To a large extent, the needs of the individual give rise to conflicts. Attaining satisfaction and fulfillment of needs is underlying aspect of each source of conflicts. For example, in a classroom, a student belonging to a special need category demands certain facilities to fulfill his/ her desire of learning in an inclusive environment. However, if the learning needs are not met according to the requirement of the special student, this may cause intrapersonal as well interpersonal conflicts in the classroom, thereby lowering the efficacy of inclusive education system. Values and beliefs system, nature of relationships, unclear role structures, interdependence in work are other common sources of conflicts. Keeping in mind these sources of conflicts, it will become easier for a teacher to manage classroom conflicts by using the conflict tree analysis pattern of observation and research. Conflicts can offer competitive as well as cooperative context in the schools however, it will vary according to the situations and methods they are dealt with. It is nearly impossible to offer a conflict- free school or classroom due to individual differences and interests both at the level of teachers and students, hence, there's a need to devise and employ conflict resolution strategies. The various skills, methods and styles of dealing a conflict in school is discussed in the following unit of the module.

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Block 2: <u>STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS</u>

Unit 1: Role of Healthy Communication

Think of a situation: A student in the classroom comes up with a bizarre question. Other students start laughing at the student and makes weird comments which are humiliating and hurtful. How does the teacher respond to such a situation? Does the teacher reprimand the student who makes the comment? Does the teacher admonish the students who are making fun of the students? In some cases, a teacher actually joins other students in laughing at student who comes up with the bizarre question! This is a situation many teachers have to grapple in their classrooms. What should be the communication strategy a teacher should adopt so that the student who came up with the question do not feel humiliated as it could have deep psychological impact on him/her? S/he could become de-motivated from asking questions again. How will the teacher bring together the students and create a safe space for all to engage in a dialogue?

These are some of the questions that keep on coming up in the course of classes and in fact in the entire educational settings. In this unit, we would look at such situations and what kind of strategies teachers could use to handle such instances. Besides, there could be instances of groups of students being at loggerheads with each other. What are the best possible ways to handle such conflicts in classrooms, playgrounds and other sites in schools/colleges?

Dear participants in the previous Block, we had discussed about the different types and nature of conflicts in schools or colleges. For resolution of any conflict, it is important to look at the genesis of the conflict from different perspectives before working out the process to resolve it.

The fulcrum of any conflict resolution process is communication. The key to the constructive handling of any dispute is how the individuals or groups involved in it talk about their differences. Use of effective mutual communication can help resolve the dispute with a win-win solution whereas aggressive posturing can further widen the rift. In our daily lives more than often we find how individuals try to stick aggressively to their positions when their ideas are threatened. People are mostly accustomed to think of differences in polarized and blame-oriented ways. For instance, in classrooms, when two students are fighting over an issue, we find that each one of them tries to blame the other for the situation. Both the students can be found to construct different stories to reiterate their positions. In fact we will find that the interactions between the two students who are in conflict are negative. The challenge before the teacher or any student who is trying to mediate to resolve the issue is to try and transform the negative communication to a positive communication. The efforts to intervene in the conflict and resolve it with a win-win solution is an art, an art to turn the breakdown or aggressive communication to a

meaningful and constructive dialogue. Constructive dialogue between the two conflicting students with the help of the teacher will help in the goals of cohesive classroom. Conflicts or differences are part of our lives and many times these cannot be avoided. However, it is the ingenuity of a teacher to help her/his students to actually make a conflict into an opportunity to learn- learn about the individuals involved in the conflict and the differences dimensions of differences. Instead of letting conflicts destroy relationships, it should be seen as a 'conversation of opportunity'. Hence, in a nutshell, the major challenge before a teacher to ensure a cohesive classroom is to promote a communication ecosystem which encourages mutual respect, mutual tolerance, dialogue and constructive resolution of differences. Encouraging a healthy communication not just in classrooms but in the school as a whole is crucial to promote a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere. While it is critical for the success of the teaching-learning process, an effective communication ecosystem helps in strengthening the student-teacher relationships thereby acting as a trigger for strong cognitive development. It helps in motivating students. It guides teachers to develop better understanding of the aspirations and problems which students could encounter during their studies. A healthy communication ecosystem creates a sense of belonging to the classroom and to the school as a whole, it aids in increasing the self-confidence of students and their desire for learning.

2.2 ENCOURAGING DIALOGUES

"Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education." (Paulo Freire, 1968, p. 92-93)

Here, Freire underlines the significance of effective communication in the education process. He points out on how one of the effective means of communication in the education system is dialogue. In fact, in order to facilitate greater learning outcomes and understanding amongst students, teachers should encourage dialogue. In fact studies show on how by engaging in a process of dialogue, students learn how to think critically, how to be more reasonable, how to develop the ability to understand the perspectives of others, develop skills to engage with each other through a participatory process and how to take decisions.

Dialogue can be described as a form of constructive discussion which aims at fostering mutual insights and achieve common purpose. It is an open and inclusive process where communication is based on respect for each other. Its main objectives are: listening with empathy, searching for common good, exploring new ideas, bringing unexplained assumptions into the open and creative problem solving. By using the strategies of nonviolent communication, we can ensure an effective dialogue.

What are the benefits of dialogue?

● Helps in overcoming mistrusts
● Individuals at odds with one another come together in a single platform with shared objectives and strategies
● Shaping of vision
● Development of new perspectives and insights
● Evolution of innovative and creative ideas
● Strengthens bonds of community

Dialogue offers students a 'safe space' to share their thoughts and ideas. When teachers encourage dialogues in the classroom, it helps them to develop valuable insights into the beliefs, ideas, questions and misconceptions of their students.

Ground rules for Effective Dialogue:

Whenever we aim to engage a group in a dialogue, it is useful to focus on common interests and not the divisive ones.

● It is a safe space where individuals are encouraged to reveal their own insights and assumptions
● The dialogue process focuses on conflicts between ideas and perspectives and not between people.
● Wherever appropriate, participants can even express their emotions
● The aim is to minimize the level of mistrust before the group pursues practical objective.

Dialogue Circles in Classrooms

Teachers can encourage dialogues in classrooms through Dialogue Circles. A classroom where the teacher stands and students sit in rows underlines a hegemonic relationship. With students sitting the rows, it is a matter of fact on who is in charge. While such arrangements have their own appropriate functions, but for encouraging dialogues through nonviolent communication, teachers can bring together the students in form of 'Dialogue Circles'. For students, it is a totally different experience from what they listen to a teacher in the traditional classrooms.

For a successful dialogue process, the physical sitting arrangement is critical. Students sit in circles facing each other. The aim is to ensure that there is no barrier between the participants like tables or chairs. Also the aim is to ensure that there is no background noise which distracts the participants. When participants sit together in a circle with no barriers, there is an inherent sense of community and belonging. One of the objectives of teachers encouraging Dialogue Circles is to build a strong community of students in the class. Here, every participant shares responsibility in the process of the dialogue. While the ground rules are to be followed by the participating students, all decisions are taken by the consensus of the entire group. Leadership skills are developed through such Dialogue Circles when a student or a few students take turns to initiate the dialogue and moderates it so that its

objectives are achieved. Dialogue Circles can be a powerful tool which teachers can use to help students develop greater understanding of an issue, enhance their communicative abilities, and help looking at diverse perspectives.

What are the Guidelines for a successful Dialogue Circle?
For any successful Dialogue Circle, the following points should be kept in mind:
● Strategies of nonviolent communication should be used by the participants
● As the teacher may have given the theme of the dialogue beforehand, it is important that the students come prepared with adequate readings.
● Each of the students should take responsibility for effective organization of the dialogue.
● Students should be able to show leadership skills in ensuring a meaningful dialogue.
● For an insightful session, students should be able to share interesting examples related to the theme of dialogue
● Students should show skills in asking questions. Questions should be open, nonjudgemental and designed to learn more.
● Students should be able to show nuanced understanding of the theme of the dialogue and should be able come up with creative ideas and suggestions
● They should be able to offer constructive reactions to comments
● They should be able to summarize
● They should be able to critical analysis of the theme

2.3 ENCOURAGING MEDIATION

In its simplest form, mediation is essentially to facilitate a conversation. According to United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation:
Mediation is a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements. The premise of mediation is that in the right environment, conflict parties can improve their relationships and move towards cooperation. Mediation outcomes can be limited in scope, dealing with a specific issue in order to contain or manage a conflict, or can tackle a broad range of issues in a comprehensive peace agreement. Mediation is a voluntary endeavour in which the consent of the parties is critical for a viable process and a durable outcome. The role of the mediator is influenced by the nature of the relationship with the parties: mediators usually have significant room to make procedural proposals and to manage the process, whereas the scope for substantive proposals varies and can change over time. Mediation as a tool of nonviolent conflict resolution can be used in families, educational institutions, in different organizations and groups. Conflicts arise due to distortion or breakdown in communication and mediation is a constructive initiative to plug the breakdown in communication for a win-win solution. In any successful mediation, the effort should be to care for the needs of

all and not just for the needs of one side. The overarching goal is to make connections. Mediation can be a very effective tool to handle conflicts in schools. Educational institutions can introduce peer mediation programmes and develop capacities of students to take the lead in mediating in case of disputes between students.

A detailed exposition of peer mediation, its different dimensions, concept, and skills needed to be a good peer mediator will be discussed in Block 3.

2.4 ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Besides skills of nonviolent conflict resolution, to ensure that students are able to manage themselves in a better way and relate to others around them, it is useful if teachers work with students to enhance their emotional intelligence. This can help them develop improved self-motivation and more effective communication skills.

Emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and the defusing of conflicts.[1]Emotional intelligence helps people to build stronger and more meaningful relationships, thrive in school, work, and home settings, and achieving individual career and other personal goals. It can also help individuals to seek connection with their own feelings, turn their intention into action, and make informed decisions about what matters most. To successfully cultivate emotional intelligence, in the observation of Mahatma Gandhi as a mentor, we can draw the connection between emotional intelligence with the awareness of moral intelligence. Moral Intelligence entails the individual's sense of "social responsibility and social relationship" [2] that connects the authenticity of an individual with another, to create inter-personal and emotional stability. Thus, to truly cultivate a peaceful classroom setting and joyful discussions, we must first, as educators, recognize our social and moral responsibilities towards our students, and their parents. Recognizing social impact and the power to influence our audiences makes the development of such a self-awareness, necessary.

In the words of Science Fiction author Issacs Asimov, "education is not something you can finish." Linking the aspects of emotional and moral intelligence, to living principally on the ideas of non-violence communication, active listening, intentional cultivation of student's character and personality development, gives teachers themselves a moral and emotional compass to their daily objectives in the classroom. Reflect on "What moral values do I intend to inspire my students with?";

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[1]https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-eq.htm.

[2]Gandhi: A Phenomenon of Emotional and Moral Intelligence.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236735551_Gandhi_A_Phenomenon_of_Emotional_and_Moral_Int elligence#:~:text=intelligence%20which%20is%20surmounted%20by,dislikes%3B%20aptitude%20and%20at titude. Website.

3Maamari, B. E., and Majdalani, J. F. (2019). The effect of highly emotionally intelligent teachers on their students' satisfaction. *Int. J. Educ. Manag.* 33, 179–193

and the follow up question of "What needs do I seek to fulfill in my student's lives". In practical wisdom, we have come to understand that the human brain cannot be fully indoctrinated with the amount of information and knowledge the world is discovering today. Human beings do not operate as computation systems. What students need, is the inspiration towards learning new topics, to be encouraged to learn, and to deepen trust between teacher and the student. To do so, teachers need to be made self-aware of their role to engage with the students. Research also showed the effectiveness of positive action in the development of teachers' emotional skills, increasingly recognizing teachers being emotionally intelligent as the basis for a good relationship with students, for providing a steady and wholesome classroom environment (Maamari and Majdalani, 2019).

Emotional and Moral intelligence is also deepened when teachers can recognise social responsibility and encourages students to realise that even they have an important role to play play in the life of the educator. When relationships are genuine and sincere, students will not superficially connect with their school, or their learning course materials. To achieve better attendance and participation from students, Educators must themselves recognize their own moral values, and how to adjust themselves before classes, emotionally and mentally, to live up to their own moral values. When Educators communicates authentically and sincerely to the students, students will feel at ease to trust the intentions of the educators and will bring their authentic self to the discussions as well. The teacher must develop empathic behavior with the students to perceive, recognize, and become aware of the students' feelings and express this understanding to them. This provides a closer connection to the relationship of affection necessary for the quality of teaching and learning. Developing these empathic skills in students also means teaching them that we do not all feel the same in similar situations and toward the same people, that individuality guides our lives, and that each person experiences different needs, fears, desires, and hates (Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera, 2002).

Quite naturally, educators might feel overwhelmed with their task and responsibilities. It is recommended that in order to lower their own anxiety and stress, educators ought to practice taking deep breaths before conducting classes and find meaningful connections in their daily experiences and classroom teaching-learning process. When the teacher discovers ways to cultivate purpose, meaning, and joy within their own lives, they can seek to develop these aspects even further when engaging interpersonally with their students. Teachers who can perceive and express emotions are able to identify the emotions and their contents. As an example, when teachers perceive discouragement in students' faces, after decoding information about facial expressions, they change the pace of the lesson, giving an example to make the explanation most understandable of the theme.

Some Emotional and Moral Intelligence Exercises to practice in schools by teachers-

Create a daily or weekly journal entry, asking yourself:

- What are the objectives for this class?
- In the journal, build the habit of jotting down student names, their birthdays, and their interests.
- In class, call students by their names instead of saying- 'you at the back' or simply pointing with a scale or pointer at student's face
- Always reflect upon the impact of your own behavior, and how this can potentially affect the students. Write them down in your journal
- Always end the class with words of appreciation towards the students. Remember: Without students, there will be no need for teachers!

2.5 STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITY IN SCHOOL

For a cohesive school environment, it is important to motivate students, teachers and the authorities to work together as a common unit. In this context, the goal should be to strengthen solidarity. Solidarity is characterized by mutual collaboration between individuals which makes it possible to overcome difficult situations. Human solidarity is founded on the principles of mutual respect of each other's uniqueness. It echoes a deep sense of appreciation of our common humanity, an intrinsic realization of the essence of human interconnectedness. It also echoes that we are individuals with intrinsic self-worth.

The importance of human solidarity was underlined by Jacques Delors at the UN Conference on Environment, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, said,: "The world is our village: if one house catches fire, the roofs over all our heads are immediately at risk. If anyone of us tries to start rebuilding, his efforts will be purely symbolic. Solidarity has to be the order of the day: each of us must bear his own share of the general responsibility. We need a global ethics to guide us in solving global issues, in strengthening our global interdependence and solidarity."WhileDelors was stressing on the need of global solidarity, in the local context, like in a school, the same principles hold. In fact when we weave in the ideas of solidarity, cohesion, community building, safe spaces to contribute one's opinion and nonviolent resolution of disputes, the overarching goal becomes a march towards a culture of peace in the school ecosystem. Classroom experiences of diversity, skills in sharing one's own thoughts, perspective taking, inclusivity, engaging in dialogues are all lived experiences which helps students to collaborate together in solidarity. Hence the aim of teachers should be to contribute towards creating a culture of peace in the classroom by providing experiences which enable students to assimilate these principles. Also the aim should be to try and ensure on how the relationships amongst students and between students and teachers manifest these principles. In our previous sections, we have underlined the importance of

nonviolent communication. When students and teachers start practicing nonviolent communication then automatically it will aim in encouraging solidarity amongst all the stakeholders in the school. Encouraging dialogues and discussions also enhances solidarity. Solidarity can be fostered through encouragement of random acts of kindness towards their fellow classmates. Guiding students to see their fellow classmates as "long-lasting friends" instead of competitors, cultivating good moral character and full-hearted personalities further contributes to the spirit of solidarity.

Some simple solidarity exercises that can be tried:

● Encourage students to make a speech addressing the classmates about how you find the class, and how you feel about your classmates. This encourages sharing of emotions and vulnerability. Be sure to check the student's speech beforehand to offer guidance on social communications.

● Encourage student-teacher-principal gatherings to learn about each other's different upbringings. This helps to humanize and demystify the association of authority positions.

● Raise student awareness on differences (Cultural, Social, Economic, Religious, Political), and guide them to recognize that differences are to be respected. And friendships can be built despite such differences.

● Conduct culture appreciation workshops, to help students familiarize with cultures they have never been in touch with.

Block 3: Introducing Peer Mediation

3.1: Importance of Restorative Practices in Educational Institutions

"Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?" **-Mahatma Gandhi**

Education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances for a healthy growth. The purpose of education is not mere literacy but self- enhancement. Educational Institutions lay the foundation of a child and hence also that of a country as a whole. It is therefore important that the students be equipped with life-sustaining abilities including dispute resolution. Conflicts as already discussed are natural to human existence. Clash of interests and needs often bring people at loggerheads. Introduction of restorative practices in educational institutions fosters an equitable and positive education ecosystem. These are a healthier alternative to the traditional disciplinary actions which are punitive in nature. The idea is not just to resolve but also heal and repair.Restorative practices are readily embraced now as they draw strength from their ability to empower students to learn from unacceptable choices and understand their impact. Also, they help themdevelop

ability to make more sound decisions and resolve problems. Students not just learn to resolve disagreements and take ownership of their behavior, but also engage in acts of empathy and forgiveness. Restorative practices focus on strengthening relationships and connections. They seek the root cause behind the individual and collective behaviour. Restoration mechanisms work in many ways:

1.   Prevent Harmful Behaviour.

2.   Build Community feeling, a sense of belonging.

3.   Promote constructive handling of conflicts.

4.   Equip one with the ability to deal with future circumstances/ self-reliance.

5.   Students acquire valuable social and emotional skills.

6.   Strengthen relationships.

7.   Provideopportunity for equitable dialogue

8.   Develop decision-making abilities.

9.   Involvement of all relevant stakeholders

10.   Address harms, needs, obligations

11.   Encourage all to take responsibility

The restorative practices are built upon the faith that we all are worthy and equal. Each individual has an immense potential to overcome problems and find permanent solutions to them. A strong community rests on a firm individual. A student well -versed with the benefits of restorative practices shares good relationships with the staff and fellow mates. Restorative practices are not just reconciliatory in nature but also preventive. In schools and colleges these days there is an increasing tendency towards groupism. These groups often reach high levels of animosity on trivial issues. Through restorative mechanisms we can help in building an inclusive ethos. Types of restorative practices used in educational institutions belong to two categories:

1. Proactive strategies such as creating a sense of community, building healthy relationships, and developing conflict resolution skills.

2. Restorative processes and practices like a system of conflict resolution in the educational institutions, peer-led practices, community conferencing, community service, peer juries, peer mediation, social emotional skill development.

3. Peer mediation can be considered as a significant mechanism for engaging and impact. Developed properly, it can be an important programme which can help in restoration and strengthening of relationships amongst peers and disposing of conflicts and disputes in educational institutions.

Out of these, peer mediation is the most engaging and impactful mechanism of restoring relationships and disposing of conflicts. Due to the rise of violence in educational institutions and the sharp increase in serious crime committed by youths, an increasing need has been felt to spread awareness of the need for restorative practices, especially peer mediation.

3.2 Overview of Peer Mediation

In the previous Block we discussed the different strategies of conflict resolution in educational institutions including those part of classroom management practices. In this Block we would try to capture the essence of peer mediation, it's important benefits for constructive resolution of disputes, the essential skills needed to be a good mediator, the general steps a peer mediator could take to do mediation.

Peer mediation is the process in which school children and young people help their peers handle and sort out their disagreements and arising conflicts. These conflicts can range from spreading rumors to fights in the playground. Thus, peer mediation is simply pupils helping their peers to resolve conflict in safe and positive ways, and peer mediation training is the process of giving pupils the knowledge, tools and skills to become peer mediators. Peer mediation sessions are always co-mediated, meaning two pupils will sit down together to mediate a conflict between two peers who are having a conflict or disagreement.

Peer mediation is a process in which students act as mediators to resolve disputes among themselves. It is a form of conflict resolution used to address student disagreements and low-level disciplinary problems.In schools and colleges, peer mediation is where children in the same age-group help to resolve problems between them. They work towards a win-win solution for both sides, helping the two sides to come together and develop a solution that works for both of them. Peer mediation is a confidential process of conflict resolution with the help of trained student mediators. It helps in dealing with a range of disputes such as:

- Disagreements
- Name-calling
- Rumors and Gossips
- Cheating and Stealing
- Teasing
- Vandalism
- Groupism

Peer Mediators are students committed towards making their institution a peaceful place to learn and grow. Just like other mediators, they come from diverse backgrounds and also represent a variety of experiences. Peer mediation can be initiated at the request of students, teachers, administrators or parents to help students resolve conflicts. Peer mediators are trained into problem solving skills, art of communication and conflict handling.Since peer mediation is based on integrative negotiation, disputing parties converse with the goal of finding a mutually satisfying solution to their disagreements, facilitated by a neutral third party. The salient feature of peer mediation as opposed to traditional discipline measures is that, outside the initial training and support services for students, the mediation process is entirely carried out by students and for students.

Unit 3.3: Benefits of Peer Mediation

Ideally, peer mediation encourages a culture of open communication and peaceful solutions to conflict. It helps students to develop skills to prevent and resolve conflicts through nonviolent means. Through this process, they are able to develop their values, skills, knowledge and attitudes. Some most common benefits of peer mediation are:

- An increased and effective communication among students, teachers, administrators, and parents.
- Reduction of violence, vandalism, and suspensions.
- Children, adolescents, teens and youth are encouraged to resolve their own disputes by developing listening, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- Learning peaceful resolution of differences, a skill needed to live in a multicultural world.
- Developing students' interest in conflict resolution, justice, the legal system, and encourage active citizenship.
- Inculcate a spirit of self-discipline amongst students.
- Students develop a greater sense of belonging to the institution.
- Promoting critical thinking and reflection abilities.
- Builds decision making abilities amongst students.
- Contributes towards cohesive schools and classrooms.
- Having acquired the skills in mediating, students can use these skills in different settings like families and neighbourhoods.

Thus, there are innumerable benefits that peer mediation can provide to educational institutions. In learning mediation, students are given the responsibility and the tools to work out problems without parental or teacher supervision, skills that they can use throughout their lives. Peer mediation also builds self-respect and encourages students to understand that their peers may have a perspective that is different from their own.

Unit 3.4: Essential Skills of an Effective Peer Mediator

A Peer mediator needs to possess skills very similar to that of a mediator such as:

- **Patience**: A mediator needs to be very patient and sensitive throughout the process of mediation.
- **Non-Judgmental Approach**: Student mediators need to keep out their biases, beliefs and preferences from the process of mediation.
- **Ability to engage in dialogue:** Throughclarifications and questions peer mediators can help parties in engaging a dialogue.
- **Emotional Intelligence** to understand what is hidden. It helps in building strong empathy i.e., an understanding of others situations. Young children may not be able to do this immediately but, with gradual training it is possible.
- **Impartiality:** Peer mediators can't takeside, they need to be fair and even-handed.
- **Good communication skills**: Both verbal and nonverbal communication skills are important in the process of mediation.
- **Empathy**to help each party stand in each other's shoes and understand each other's point of view.
- **Active listening skills**to make the parties feel heard and understood.
- **Trustworthiness:**Mediator should inspire trust in both the parties, so that they can open up with him/her.
- **Approachability**: Apeer mediator should be friendlyand respectful.

Apart from this sincerity, dedication, perceptiveness, far-sightedness, neutrality and discipline are other few enabling traits of a good peer mediator. However, it may be pertinent to point out here that a peer mediator trained in the art of nonviolent communication, automatically acquires the other skills essential to the process of mediation.

Unit 3.5: Nonviolent Communication as an Essential Skill of Peer Mediators

Mahatma Gandhi's approach to nonviolent communication entails: (1) nonviolent speech and action; (2) maintenance of relationships and enrichment of personhood; (3) openness; and (4) flexibility.
Gandhi's nonviolent communication has been aptly encapsulated by India's first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, who in his introduction to the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi wrote:
Here are the words of the Master covering some six decades of a superbly human and intensely active public life- words that shaped and nurtured a unique movement and led it to success; words that inspired countless individuals and

showed them the light; words that explored and showed a new way of life; words that emphasized cultural values which are spiritual and eternal, transcending time and space and belonging to all humanity and all ages.

Senior Gandhian, Shri Natwar Thakkar gives us a comprehensive explanation on what is NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION:

To me nonviolent communication would mean how our communication efforts should be nonviolent; how our ability and capacity to communicate not only with ourselves but with our family and society be nonviolent in all aspects and overall how the entire process of communication whether between individuals, groups, communities and the world at large should be nonviolent in nature. This would entail deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and its centrality in all our daily actions. It's not just verbal and nonverbal communication, nonviolent communication literacy would also include whether our thoughts and ideas are nonviolent or not. This would also mean how we can rid of our preconceived notions of individuals or groups with whom we want to communicate and stop evaluating them to suit our own ideas. More than often we are attuned to think in terms of moralistic judgments which may be our own constructions.

By developing deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and integrating it in our communication practices we could get over with biased and moralistic judgments; this in turn could contribute to emotional bridge building.

By being nonviolent communication literate, an individual/group/community will be able to self-introspect whether the message they want to share has elements of violence and whether such a message will hurt others. Nonviolent communication literacy would automatically help in strengthening and deepening relationships. When we are able to emotionally build bridges with others, we will be able to empathize with their views.

Nonviolent communication literacy also includes mastering the art of listening. His Holiness The Dalai Lama has rightly said, "When you talk you are only repeating what you already know; but when you listen you may learn something new." Essentially, we should learn to listen with a sincere intention to understand, open and focused on what the other person is trying to tell.

The way we use language and words while writing and conversations is an important aspect of nonviolent communication literacy.

So, I firmly believe that by practicing nonviolent communication, there can be amazing opportunities to promote goodness in our world which keeps on getting struck with conflicts. It is an essential part of efforts to evolve a culture of peace and nonviolence not just in our homes but in the entire world. This is also an antidote to

all acts of revenge, aggression and retaliation as all these arises from breakdown in communication or our reliance in violence in communication.

i. **Nonviolent Communication means complete lack of violence in the way we communicate with others.**

This includes both verbal and nonverbal communication. Several times, knowingly or unknowingly, we become violent and the words, without realizing, we use may hurt others. When we are violent in our communication, we tend to humiliate others and there is every possibility that the other person could also be violent with us. Violence in communication leads to communication breakdown and trust deficit; it sows the seeds of conflict. So, the next time, you are communicating with anyone consciously think of whether your message is hurting others or not.

ii. **Constructive Intrapersonal Communication - our Self Talk and Inner Dialogue**

In today's world, we are living amidst lot of negativities. Besides, with surfeit of digital technologies, most of us do not have time for ourselves. Just reflect on your daily habits. How many hours in a day do you end up browsing your smartphone? What is your daily intake of social media diet? If each one of start calculating we will find most of us spend substantial part of our time texting or spending time in the social media. The reality is that most of us end up sparing very little time for ourselves. Very rarely we get time to communicate with ourselves!!!

This leads us to an important question: When was the last time you met yourself? **Please reflect on this for a while.**

Here are some benefits of communicating with oneself:

When we start communicating with ourselves, we will develop patience and before arguing with others, we will start reflecting. We can practice nonviolent communication by observing our inner self and deeply listening to our self-talk. This will help us to look for creative solutions of our feelings and needs and also on how we connect with others. Practicing nonviolent communication with oneself is important.

Also, friends, learn to practice self-empathy as it is important to spot our shortcomings and reasons of our possible biases and judgments vis-a-vis others. For instance, in a situation where we have differences of opinion, if we start blaming the other person for the conflict solely, it means we do not have control over our own emotions. However, when we start looking at the situation from the other person's point of view, we are being self-aware.

To sum up, Swami Vivekananda reminds us: There is, however, one great danger in human nature, viz, that man never examines himself. He thinks he is quite as fit to be on the throne as the king.

Another important aspect to keep in mind is constant reflection of our self-talk and inner dialogues. We should always strive to ensure that our self-talk and inner dialogues are constructive in nature. Aggressive inner dialogues or self-talk will make us stressful and could affect our communication with others.

iii. **Nurturing deep faith in principles of humanism**

In her 1985 book, 'The Human Condition", Hannah Arendt gives an apt exposition of the core value of humanism:

"Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see the sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear."

Humanism can be understood as the notion that all humans have something fundamental in common. Despite our diverse backgrounds and all our differences, we all belong to humankind. The shared experience of being human affords us the ability to acknowledge and value the human condition. It is a lifestyle that urges us to respect and cherish human values and dignity and compels us to transcend our differences and to acknowledge our common humanity. We can achieve personal growth and facilitate the growth of other people by reminding ourselves of our shared predicament. Our communication efforts should entail the spirit of humanism and humanistic principles.

iv.

v. **Use of Appropriate and Positive Language**

vi. Words and the manner they are used is significant. Words can be described as medicine- they can cure or heal but if used improperly we will become unhealthy. Constant use of violent words will disturb our mental balance and we will end up becoming stressful. Use of appropriate language and words that are positive in nature are keys to nonviolent communication. It should also be noted that words may have different meanings and interpretations in different cultures. We must remember that through language and communication we can see the heart of a people. It means that language makes it possible to express feelings, emotions, views, ideas, opinions, perceptions as well as judgment about people, objects, places, things, information and situations.

vii. Inappropriate use of language and words can contribute to conflicts while use of nonviolent expressions can help in resolution of conflicts. An eminent scholar had aptly said, ''Language is the key to the heart of a people''. Language is hence a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires.

viii. While you read this section, think of the last time when you had tiff with your friend and you ended up using inappropriate language. Could you have used some different words which wouldn't have hurt your friend?

If we reflect closely, we will realize that many a times we use words and language that suffocates others. But we can still express our feelings by using different phrases and language. It all boils down on the words that we are using in our communication and the style of our delivery.

Here is an interesting example one is tempted to share.

Sometime back one was with a senior. He wanted his driver to take a courier packet. He called his driver and asked his driver if he was available. The driver came. He then politely asked him if by taking the courier packet he would not be burdened. Defenseless by this true approach of nonviolent communication, the driver promptly responded that he would not be burdened by taking the courier packet.

The senior could have ordered the driver as he was the boss. But instead he relied on using nonviolent communication. Such approaches strengthen relationships and mutual respect.
Again, think of a scenario where you want certain things from an acquaintance. If you are using aggressive language it may put off that person. However, if you use positive nonviolent communication, you could end up succeeding in getting your request fulfilled.

To sum up, it would be pertinent to quote Archbishop Desmond Tutu on the importance of language "Language is very powerful. Language does not just describe quality. Language creates the reality it describes. We should try to take responsibility of our action, words and feelings and not blame others for these."

ix. **Expansion of our emotional vocabulary and managing emotions during our process of communication**
A cornerstone of nonviolent action and communication is the ability to express one's emotions effectively. Processing and expressing one's emotions fully and accurately require one to have the required emotional vocabulary for it. Expanding one's emotional vocabulary entails learning and using a diverse range of words to describe specific feelings and emotions. This not only helps the individual communicate their experience more effectively to other people, but it also helps them to experience their emotions more fully, which in turn allows them to address them more adeptly.

The first step to gaining emotional awareness is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the entire spectrum of emotions that we are capable of experiencing.

x. **Avoiding stereotypes in our communication efforts**

Just think of a situation when you find that someone's pocket has been picked in your area. There are a few homeless people around. In all probability, many around would immediately blame these homeless people as pickpockets. More than often we are used to falling into the trap of stereotypes.

An important component of nonviolent communication is avoidance of stereotypes. More than often we fall into the trap of stereotyping individuals without understanding their points dispassionately. We stereotype individuals on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, caste, disabilities and many other criteria. We generally make our responses on the basis of the stereotypes which we construct. This is not nonviolent communication.

By categorizing people on the basis of different parameters and putting them into those brackets results in breakdown in communication. So, friends, try to make it a habit of avoiding stereotypes while communicating.

xi. **Avoid Moralistic Judgments**

Another frequent drawback is how we end up in drawing comparisons between individuals. Avoiding being judgmental is another important component of nonviolent communication. Dale Carnegie has aptly said, "Even God doesn't propose to judge a man till his last days, why should you and I?"

Marshall Rosenberg terms such types of judgmental communication as 'life-alienating' communication. In his book, Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, he says, "One kind of life-alienating communication is the use of moralistic judgments that imply wrongness or badness on the part of people who don't act in harmony with our values. Such judgments are reflected in language: "The problem with you is that you're too selfish." "She's lazy." "They're prejudiced." "It's inappropriate." Blame, insults, put-downs, labels, criticism, comparisons, and diagnoses are all forms of judgment."

According to Rosenberg, life-alienating communication is 'a language that is rich with words that classify and dichotomize people and their actions.' Also making comparisons between individuals or groups is another shortcoming in our communication. Making comparisons are a form of judgement. Rosenberg goes on to term the demand we make of our desires as also life-alienating communication which should be avoided if we are to practice nonviolent communication.

Think of a classroom situation. We often find teachers making moralistic judgements of their students' potential. They could for instance tell a student why s/he is not performing in comparison to another student. We could, by using such moralistic judgments, end up humiliating people or groups.

xii. **Avoid Evaluative Language**

Philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti says the highest form of human intelligence is when we observe without evaluating. For most of us it is extremely challenging on how we observe people and their behaviour without evaluating them. How is it possible to observe someone dispassionately without bringing into play our preconceived notions? Nonviolent communication necessitates that we learn to make observation without evaluations using preconceived notions.

For instance, think of yourself as a coach of the school football team. Say one of your players has not scored a goal in 15 matches. As a coach you will most probably scold the player by saying, 'you are repeatedly putting the team down by not scoring any goal, you are not good enough'. This is your evaluative statement. But if you tell the player, 'well you may not have scored in the last 15 matches but I am sure you will do in the next matches'. This may help the player to make renewed attempts to practice harder and feel you still have faith in his ability. If we are practicing nonviolent communication, we should desist from evaluative statements and straight-jacketed generalizations.

xiii. **Role of mutual respect in communication**

Mutual respect is critical element of nonviolent communication. It is the basic building block. If you do not respect others, you cannot expect a meaningful dialogue. Mutual respect requires that we should be aware of the impact of our behaviour and the way we talk on others. By practicing respect towards others during interactions and dialogues, we are being attentive, acknowledging their presence, trying to understand them and their point of views and accepting them.

Also, when we make mutual respect as part of our daily habits, it would be easier for us to use the most appropriate positive language even when we find ourselves in an emotionally charged situation.

xiv. **The Power of Empathy**

*"Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with our adversaries quickly or think of them charitably." - **Mahatma Gandhi***

Nonviolent communication enables us to make empathetic connections. We should be conscious of the power of empathy. Here is an important quote of Swami Vivekananda which inspires us to empathetic: One-sidedness is the bane of the world. The more sides you can develop the more souls you have, and you can see the universe through all souls.

For instance, when we are in a conflict with a friend, instead of just blaming her/his for the situation, we should try to put ourselves in the shoes of that friend and then make our points. In fact, we should practice more deeply. We should go beyond

just putting ourselves into the other's shoes at the surface level; instead we should practice to deeply understand the other's position from all dimensions before embarking on our arguments.

By empathizing with others, we can touch the humanness of others. Connecting empathetically with others is an important objective of nonviolent communication. It entails not just connecting with one self or other individuals but with all including nature and other living beings. The need for empathetic connection is beautifully stressed in this quote of Chief Seattle, "Man did not weave the web of life, and he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. All things are bound together. All things connect." Lack of empathy is roadblock to proper communication and can result in conflicts.

In general, it can be said that empathy begets empathy. If you practice, you can expect others also to be empathetic to you and this can be a chain. We can say that positive and empathetic behaviour can spread if it is practices with right earnest.

Studies have shown that empathetic individuals tend to experience greater subjective well-being. Another study shows that the need to feel good and be a moral person can be a great motivator to act empathetically.

In his book, The Empathetic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis, Jeremy Rifkin notes that human nature is fundamentally empathetic rather than selfish and competitive. Rifkins points out, "If we can harness empathetic sensibilities and establish a new global ethic to harmonize the many relationships that make up to life-sustaining forces of the planet, we will have moved beyond the detached, self-interested and utilitarian philosophical assumptions."

Myrha Walden (Soka Gakai International) talks on the significance of empathetic communication, "When someone receives our suffering quietly, openheartedly and without judgment, we are able to open ourselves to our pain. We experience it fully, release it, and in so doing, we heal. Clarity emerges, and we gain access to inner wisdom."

xv. **Strong belief in the power of compassion**
"A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."
— Albert Einstein.

A basic premise of nonviolent communication is all human beings are capable of being compassionate. When we reach out to others with compassion, we can expect others to be compassionate with us.

We all know that developing social connections are an underlying drive of human behaviour. Also, majority of us desire meaningful interactions through these social connections. But to establish such connections, we should develop the capacities to express care and concern for others and also to identify with them. It is in this context, by being compassionate, we can promote kind and loving behaviour with others. Also, when we are compassionate towards others- fellow beings, nature and all other living beings, we will be less stressful and will feel better. It is an important dimension to our well-being. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama has rightly said, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

Studies have suggested that when we practice compassion in groups, we can promote greater cooperation. So friends, as a nonviolent communicator, make it a habit to be compassionate as it has manifold benefits.

xvi. **Connecting with needs of others**

Human needs are universal. The manner we feel is mostly based whether our needs are met or unmet. Much of our action are guided on how are needs are met or they remain unmet.

Here it would be pertinent to mention that Mahatma Gandhi had said that there is enough in the Earth for everyone's needs but not for our greed. It is only when our aim to meet our excessive greed becomes the objective than most of the conflicts begins.

Often we associate 'needs' to something negative. But this should not be the case as we mentioned that human needs are universal. Conscious attempts need to be made to connect with the feelings, perspectives and needs of others. But when we start analyzing the 'needs' without being judgmental and at a basic level, we would not be looking at it as a negative entity.

Many of the problems or conflicts arise because we are not ready to understand the needs of the others; what was the particular need of the person concern because of which s/he is behaving in such a manner. For instance, let us say there is a marital discord. If both the husband and wife start critically understand and pin-point that particular need of each other because of which they are acting in a different way, much of the dispute would get over.

So, in a nutshell, we should try to pin-point not only our own needs but when we are dealing with others, try to understand their needs. This will help us engage with others in a positive manner.

xvii. **Importance of flexibility in our communication**

Flexibility is another important element of our communication process. Much of the problems happen when we refuse to be flexible and we start to believe that whatever we are communicating is correct.

George Bernard Shaw had rightly said, "Progress is impossible with change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." Being flexible leads us to another important aspect, the capacity to show openness in our communicative abilities.

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, "Openness is not a matter of giving something to someone else, but it means giving up your demand and the basic criteria of the demand … It is learning to trust in the fact that you do not need to secure your ground, learning to trust in your fundamental richness, that you can afford to be open. This is the open way."

In short, let's try and practice flexibility and openness in our communication efforts.

xviii. **Practicing active listening skills**

Practicing active listening skills is critical for nonviolent communication. Every time we enter into a conversation, we should carefully listen to the other; try to understand the message they want to convey- both verbal and nonverbal communication; and try to learn from others. As active listeners, we should practice to summarize on what we have grasped from the other speakers; it will enhance our understanding. We also should try to pay serious attention to our responses and what we say during the conversation or dialogue.

Conscious attempts need to be made to sincerely listen to others. In our daily lives, we can easily feel when the other person is listening to us with sincerity and is engaging. We can easily understand that the other person is 'present'. It gives us the space for conversation and even if there are differences of views, it keeps the door open for further engagement.

According to Thais Mazur and Wendy Wood in their book, Do Not Harm: Mindful Engagement for a World in Crisis, "Deep listening includes both the mind and the body as instruments of listening-physical awareness, cognitive reflection, and emotional attunement. This is represented in varying degrees of emotional, psychological, and even spiritual components giving us the ability to listen closely to subtleties, and to the possibilities at hand."

They further point out, "If we sit with others and listen, not just with our ears but also with our bodies and whole being, we find that the words we thought we ought to say or planned on saying, may have changed. A new set of words begin to formulate a different way of communicating our knowledge is blended with our insights in the moment."

xix. **Expressing gratitude**

We must practice to express gratitude to whatever we have and whatever anyone does for us. This is an important ingredient of nonviolent communication and it makes us more aware.

Gratitude means feeling thankful or returning the kindness or generosity received from others. As the world finds itself in turmoil and violence of different kinds, each and every individual strive to explore ways to remain happy and live peacefully. Different studies have shown that by expressing gratitude and making this as our habit makes us feel better. Gratitude breathes positivity into whatever we are trying to do and it helps us to improve the quality of our lives.

Underlining the significance of gratitude in nonviolent communication, Marshall Rosenberg had aptly said, "The more you become a connoisseur of gratitude, the less you are a victim of resentment, depression and despair. Gratitude will act as an elixir that will gradually dissolve the hard shell of your ego, your need to possess and control, and transform you into a generous being. . ."

Friends, we would suggest you maintain a daily gratitude journal where you, while retiring to bed, note down the situations and people who have helped you during the course of the day in some way or the other.

Unit 3.6: Dealing with Emotions during Peer Mediation:

Emotions are information. Acknowledging them is important to make the parties feel being heard. A mediator can't think of feelings as irrelevant. The value of emotional communication is manifold in dispute resolution. Reflecting upon the feelings allows one reach the root cause of a conflict. Strong emotions show that people are invested. If a party expresses an emotion, a mediator must stay with them and listen, reflect, and express empathy. Emotions should be seen as an opportunity by granting them legitimacy. Emotional avoidance should be confronted and instead identification with them should be encouraged to seek everlasting solutions.However, dealing with emotions is a dicey slope, especially incase of a major emotional outbreak that may disrupt entire communication channel. Mediators need to keep a check on not just the emotions of the parties but also their own.They can do so in following ways:

- **By cultivating an environment of safety and trust**

Creating an environment in which parties feel safe and comfortable is the responsibility of a mediator. One start by being sensitive to decisions like seating arrangements. On a deeper level this can be done by explicitly expressing commitment to keep the matter under mediation confidential and to maintain

neutrality. Focusing on the needs of the parties encourages them to express their emotions in a more constructive way. These also help parties in letting their guard down and express themselves more freely. As a result, parties better understand not just their own emotions and needs, but it also another's interests. For example, in a dispute involving cheating, a mediator needs to maintain his moral stand as well as neutrality both.

- **Let emotions be therapeutic**:

Eyal Winter, the author of Feeling Smart: Why Our Emotions Are More Rational Than We Think, notes that "there is logic in emotion and often emotion in logic." A conflict involving angry or upset parties is difficult.A mediator should let it unfold on its own and allow the table and its contents to grow.Emotions when expressed effectively have a therapeutic effect by offering catharsis. The mediator only needs to channelize them in right direction and catch the right nerve. However, this process should not become destructive. If the emotions become to overwhelming, one must return to the process of mediation.

- **Divert/ Take a break:**

A mediator needs to diffuse built up tensions and pressures by diverting attention towards positive aspects. By highlighting the concern of each party towards the issue, positive sentiments can be evoked. Apart from this a mediator may allow parties some time to cool down in form of a break and engage in private conversations too.

- **Bring parties back into the present:**

Parties in conflict are often stuck in the past. Blaming each other for the wrongs previously done. Being transparent and reminding the parties of their ultimate goal i.e., resolution can help mediator steer clear through such a situation. Parties must be reminded of the future possibilities that lie ahead of the resolution.

- **Letting go of emotions:**

Emotional reactions during mediation must be identified, recognised and expressed. Stephen Coveyin his book, The 3rd Alternative: Solving Life's Most Difficult Problems – which looks at taking the heat out of conflict, emphasises the need for patience listening. He insists is that a mediator should let parties have their say so they can then start moving away from their emotional, irrational response towards a rational, reasoned response. If a party is genuinely upset by something the other party has done or said and it's getting in the way of moving forward, it is important to give it the space to express frustration, anger or disappointment, hopefully in a polite and controlled way.Occasionally, this level of honesty may lead to a shouting match but this will never fatally wound the mediation. Giving parties

the opportunity to express their feelings enables them to let go of their pent-up emotions and return to rational thought.

Unit 3.7: General Steps for Peer Mediation:

Peer mediation can be done both in formal as well as informal settings. The procedure however remains the same. Broadly speaking, peer mediation may be conducted in following manner:

1.   Beginning: This includes making the disputants comfortable and thereafter the mediator introduces him or herself and explains the rules.

2.   Identifying the Issue: The mediator endeavours to engage parties in a dialogue to understand the situation. He/ she listens to each party's description of the problem and arrives upon an "agenda" that includes all the elements of a dispute.

3.   Understanding the facts and Feelings: While the disputants narrate their sides of the story, the underlying facts and feelings pertaining to the problem come to the surface. The mediator may facilitate this surfacing through questions and clarifications with the goal of helping to refocus the problem by viewing it differently.

4.   Generating Options: The mediator may insist that the parties brainstorm in order to figure out how they might solve the problem. All the possible solutions should be jotted down and the ones that are mutually agreed upon should be marked. If no solution is forthcoming, participants should return to understanding of facts and feelings once again. Individual sessions with each disputant and the mediator may be necessary in such situations.

5.   Agreement: Once a mutually agreeable solution is arrived at, the mediator writes a contract using the solutionand everyone signs it.

6.   Follow-Up: After a period of time the former disputants will report back to the mediator on whether the contract is being upheld by both parties.

Since peer mediation is conducted in the same age group, it may involve friendly banters, diversions, hand shakes and other amicable gestures too during the dialogue.

Unit 3.8: Peer Mediation as part of Educational Institution Ecosystem: Case Studies

Peer mediation programs have an underlying assumption that conflict is a natural part of life that should neither be avoided nor allowed to escalate into verbal or physical violence. Equally important is the idea that children and adolescents need

a venue in which they are allowed to practically apply the conflict resolution skills they are taught. Within educational ecosystem,peer mediation programs vary widely in their scope and function. Mediation may be offered in educational institutions as an alternative to traditional disciplinary measures for low-level disruptive behavior. For example, students who swear at each other or initiate fights might agree to participate in mediation rather than being referred to the playground supervisor or principal. Mediation may also take place in addition to disciplinary measures. For example, assault and criminal activities need punitive measures apart from counselling. Trained peer mediators can create a safe atmosphere, allowing disputing students to tell their stories and assisting them in working out a mutually acceptable agreement. Since the solution is not forced, the disputants feel empowered to take responsibility for their actions. The conflicts that may be resolved through peer mediation include interpersonal disputes like friendship issues, verbal harassment, spreading rumors, physical aggression, or other bullying behaviors.

Peer mediation sessions can be formal or informal. Referrals can be made either by students themselves or teachers. Disputants, however, must voluntarily participate. In formal mediation a peer mediator or a team of two mediators meet at a scheduled time and place with the disputants. The sessions vary in length depending on the nature of the conflict and some may be conducted over several days. Sessions take place during class time, recess, lunch time, or after school. If a dispute occurs in the hall, cafeteria, or on the playground, peer mediators may engage in informal mediation. Let us try to understand how peer mediation assists building better educational ecosystem through following case studies:

CASE STUDY 1: The Swing Fight

Meeta and Geeta were fighting over a swing in the playground during recess. Agitated Meeta threw sand at Geeta, who was on the swing, and they began yelling at each other. Their classmate Mansi stopped the fight and brought them both to peer mediation. Meeta insisted that they both raced to the swings at the same time and she reached it first. She blamed Geeta for throwing sand at her when she on the swing. While Geeta maintained that Meeta had cheated and pulled her hair really hard to reach the swing first. It hurt a lot, so I threw some sand at her, just a little bit. Here the peer mediator Mansi's role is to make them understand how they could have easily taken turns to get on the swing instead of fighting through a dialogue. Also, they both could have avoided harming each other during the process. This will help students understand the value of sharing and caring in true enjoyment.

CASE STUDY 2: Dealing with a crush and peer pressure

Rahul has been teasing Jai at recess repeatedly. Raghav noticed it and took them both to cafeteria for a conversation. Jai told Raghav that every recess Jai calls me names and makes faces at me because he knows about my crush and mocks me for being weak at heart. I want him to stop teasing me. Rahul on the other hand wanted Jai to stop diverting his mind and focus on studies instead. Raghav as a peer mediator needs to get them talking about right manner to express their concerns and feelings to each other and also to respect what is natural. Friendships should be enabling support systems instead of mocking treaties.

CASE STUDY 3: The Drug Rumor

A rumor going around in the college that Sachin has been doing drugs. It was found out by him that his best friend Ananya had started the rumor. After a confrontation, they both came in to peer mediation. During the face-to-face conversation, Ananya revealed that Sachin was behaving weird from past few days and since she knew that his brother had gotten into trouble with drugs which also affected his family, she told some of her friends that maybe Sachin too was doing drugs but never really meant it. But now the rumor has gone out of control. She felt really bad as she didn't mean for it to go this far. Sachin on the other hand was concerned that ever since the rumor everybody has been treating him differently, eyeing him and whispering things as he passes by. Being a close friend Ananya knew abou this brother being in rehabilitation, recovering from his heroin addiction, and that it affected my entire family, including me. She knew about Sachin's depression and even then, she had spread such an insensitive, disgusting rumor. Since the matter involves reputation and emotions, here the peer mediator will not just attempt to give vent to their emotions but also help them reach their respective goal's i.e., apology seeking by Ananya and redemption of reputation for Sachin. For Ananya, the mediation goal shall be restoration of friendship and acceptance of apology by Sachin both. Here the students shall learn the value of mindful and nonviolent communication.

CASE STUDY 4: New Group of Friends

 Jai and Veeru used to be best friends in school, but in college Jai started hanging out with new friends who did not like Veeru. Veeru posted a picture of him and Jai on Instagram in an attempt to rekindle their old friendship. Jai's new friends saw it they told him Veeru did not match his status. Jai wants to hang out with Veeru but he also doesn't want to lose his new friends. Peer mediation here can help not just Jai and Veeru to get back together but can also help in resolving issues between Jai's new friends and Veeru. The mediator's role is to encourage strengthening of bonds and generate feelings of oneness amongst them all.

CASE STUDY 5: Sleepover vs. Pool Party

Jasmine and Isha were caught fighting at school, so both were referred to peer mediation to sort out the issue. Jasmine had invited Isha to a sleepover. But Sushmita had also invited her to a pool party. Isha went to the pool party which offended Jasmine. Isha insisted that she did not prefer Sushmita over Isha, instead she went for the pool party because she was keen practicing swimming. In this case the role of a mediator is to make both of them understand their concern for each other through a dialogue. While Jasmine needs to understand that choosing one party over other doesn't mean choosing one person over other, Isha needs to be apologetic about hurting Jasmine's sentiments unintentionally.

The above case studies highlight the importance of peer mediation in building friendships and atmosphere congenial to the academic and personal growth of the students. Certain issues however trivial they may appear, can hamper mental development of the children. Making peer mediation an integral part of the educational institution ecosystem, shall increase its efficiency manifold.

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Block 4: Towards a Gandhian Model of Peer Mediation

Unit 4.1: Gandhian Approach to Conflict Resolution:

Gandhi firmly believed in the basic goodness of human beings and nonviolent nature of humanity. Conflicts according to him are rooted in distrust and friction. The Gandhian method of conflict resolution, therefore does not focus on the immediate redressal of the conflict but goes beyond that to look at its underlying sources. His nonviolent approach to conflict resolution, popularly known as Satyagraha, touches all three aspects of conflict i.e., the attitude of the parties, theirbehaviour and the goal incompatibility. It can be thus applied to smaller as well as larger disputes occurring in different areas of human life. This approach is based on his moral philosophy, the undercurrents of which are truth and nonviolence.

According to Thomas Weber there are three prerequisites of a successful Satyagraha:

1) Elements of common interest to all the contending parties must be found.

2) An appeal should be made to the heart and mind of the parties to which they are amenable.

3) Those who commence Satyagraha, should be resolute enough to carry itthrough to the end.

Once all these essential prerequisites are fulfilled the process of conversion can be initiated. There are several steps in the conversion process, which include:

- The very first step is reasoning with the opponent.
- Persuasion ormoral appeal comes second.
- Tools of non-cooperationor civil disobedience should be used as last resort.

The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution is based on the premise that a committed individual can resolve conflicts in a creative and fruitful way. It further assumes that conflicts move from the competitive to the cooperative spot in a continuum. In the Gandhianapproach victory or winning is not important but the satisfaction of all the parties to the conflict with the outcome is. This can happen only when something mutual is worked out between the parties so that the resolution is stable and everlasting.

Conflict Norms of Gandhi include beliefs such as conflict is built into social structures and not into people, resolution should aimto preserve the individual whilesystematically targeting the structure, unity of means and end, recognition of the unity of all forms of life and adherence to truth and nonviolence. Johan Galtunghas summarized Gandhi's conflict resolution norms as follows:

- All actions in conflicts should arise out of conviction and not out of necessity.

- A conflict must be well defined i.e., one's own goals should be stated clearly and opponent's goals must be understood.
- A positive approach to conflict should be maintained. Conflict should be seen as anopportunity to meet the opponent, as an opportunity to transform the society and the self.
- One should not harm or hurt others with eitherwords, thoughts or deeds i.e., all actions should be nonviolent.
- Acting in a goal-consistent manner by including constructiveelements.
- Being open, not secretive.
- One should not cooperate with evil orwith those who cooperate with evil.
- Readiness to sacrifice.
- Polarisation of thesituation and escalation of the conflict, should be avoided.
- Conflicts should be solved by insisting on the essentials and willing to sacrifice on non-essentials.
- Accepting fallibility and admittingmistakes.
- Not judging the opponents harder than oneself norexploiting their weaknesses;
- Aim for conversion rather than coercion, notonly of the opponent but conversion of the self as well, by seeking solutions that can beacceptable to both the parties.

Unit 4.2: Understanding the Gandhian Model of Peer Mediation:

"In the Gandhian model the individual comes to a conflict situation as one who is not innately aggressive and has thefreedom of will to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent way freely chosen." - Thomas Weber

Gandhi was a man of action. He looked at individual as a potent weapon of change. His approach to conflict resolution has been transformative. Mahatma targeted the root cause of conflict to ensure its complete elimination. This holds true in the context of peer mediation too. To him peer mediation would be an opportunity to nip the evil in the bud during the growing years of children, so that they develop into better adults. The process of mediation here will need to be interesting to catch and hold the attention of teens and adolescents throughout. **A Gandhian model of peer mediation would therefore be innovative, creative, educative as well as transformative.**

An important attribute of a Gandhian peer mediator would be to adhere to the Gandhian principles of nonviolence. Let us try to assimilate the Gandhian approach to nonviolence.

The grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Arun Gandhi (2017), in his book, The Gift of Anger, elaborates on the five basic pillars of Gandhi's nonviolence. These we can say are precisely the pillars of nonviolent communication. All these aspects are

critical for our harmonious communication ecosystem, whether we are involved in intrapersonal communication, interpersonal, group or mass communication. Also these are important aspects of any process of resolving conflicts and mediation.

These include:

1. Respect,
2. Understanding,
3. Acceptance,
4. Appreciation, and
5. Compassion.

Anyone imbibing these five basic pillars can practice nonviolence in their daily lives without much difficulty.

Arun Gandhi beautifully explains the five pillars of nonviolence:

"Respect and understanding of other people, whatever their religion, race, caste, or country, is the only way the world can go forward. Putting up walls and divisions always backfires in the end, leading to anger, rebellion, and violence. In contrast, when we respect and understand each other, we naturally evolve to that third pillar, acceptance. The ability to accept other views and positions allows us to grow stronger and wiser. The other two pillars of nonviolence-appreciation and compassion- help bring about personal happiness and fulfilment as well as greater harmony in the world."

So, friends, the formula is simple. Just try and make it into a habit of respecting others irrespective of their class and the communities they come from. If you respect others, others will tend to respect you. This is true also for nature and all other living beings. We must respect nature by all means otherwise we will end up creating an imbalance in the relationship between nature and humans. Similarly, we must try to respect all other living beings- all animals and birds around us.

Mutual respect leads to greater understanding. Many times, we find that our inability to understand others' points of view leads to mistrust and disputes. However, when we have respect for someone, even if there is a misunderstanding, we can get over it without getting into a messy fight.

In the context of communication, mutual respect makes it easier for individuals who are interacting to listen to each other deeply. It shows that those who are communicating are genuinely interested in understanding each other and are not delving in manipulations. Also, mutual understanding in the communicative process helps in greater collaboration and cooperation. For a peer mediator who has deep

respect for all those who are in conflict, it will be much easier to understand the positions of the conflict parties and respond accordingly.

When we have mutual respect and mutual understanding, it is easier to accept each other's position. As human beings, each one of us is likely to have different perspectives and opinions. Much of the problem arises where we get entrapped taking an egoistic stand. However, respect and understanding help us to accept each other's position. Again the mediator will be able to use his techniques of nonviolent persuasion to work out a situation where the conflicting parties are ready to accept each other's position.

At a time when there is so much negativity around and very easily, we can get entrapped into a whirlpool of negative energies, it is significant that we learn to appreciate the positive things around us. You may be angry but if you pause and see the beautiful flowers outside your anger is likely to get reduced. Think of the positive things happening in your lives and you will realize how you can get over the negative energies. Positive appreciation leads to positive energy and it, in turn, leads to positive and healthy communication.

Similarly, the fifth pillar of Gandhian nonviolence is compassion. We will delve into this important aspect of nonviolent communication in our Unit on Elements of Nonviolent Communication.

We must remember that by imbibing the above five pillars, we will be able to inculcate positive attitudes. The negativity that often surrounds us will diminish and we will evolve as individuals and as a society at large. Negative and violent relationships cannot help in building a homogenous family or society; it is only positivity and nonviolent action that can promote social cohesion. We can encapsulate that imbibing the five pillars of Gandhian nonviolence, a peer mediator can effectively collaborate with the conflicting parties.

The following are suggested steps which a peer mediator could follow:

- **Stepping into mediator's shoes**: This step consists of mediator's preparation for the mediation process, where the mediator acquires necessary skills and understands his/her role in mediation.
- **Getting familiar with the process**: In this step the mediator shall introduce the parties to the mediation process, set expectations for possible outcomes and answer any process-related questions the parties might have.
- **Friendly banter**: Heart to heart conversations help teenagers, children and adolescents to build trust and open up with each other. Anecdotes by mediator containing similar experiences from other youngsters may help towards setting in a conversation.

- **Nonviolent and Emotional Communication**: Adolescents are a vulnerable group, they have a desire to be heard and understood failing which they develop emotional issues. Once the stage is set in, the emotions, feelings, expectations should be brought to the table. While mediator should attune into the energyand intensity behind the words and actions of the disputants.
- **Gathering Information**. In this part of the mediation, the mediator engages with the parties by asking a series of question to try to gain a better understanding of the parties needs and the issues involved in the dispute.
- **Setting an Agenda**. Through setting the agenda the mediator identifies key areas of dispute to determine a path forward.
- **Generating and assessing innovative/creative options**. In this stage the mediator would assist the parties with generating creative options and assessing them for moving forward.
- **Building an Agreement:** After assessing the options, the mediator assists the parties with building the final agreement which is mutually agreeable.
- **Mutual forgiveness by the parties of each other:** Forgiveness is crucial to emotional and intellectual growth of the teenagers/children/adolescents. Bitter past experiences make them wary of trying new opportunities.
- **Learning the appropriate behaviour:** This is very crucial to the development of children into self-reliant and respectful adults.
- **Closing:** In this stage the mediator would close the process, thanking the parties for their candor and participation.
- **A shared meal or a snack**
- **Reflection.** This is a critical stage of the process where the mediator would reflect on their approach and practice and make notice for future areas of improvement.

Caucus stage of mediation could occur at any point as per the requirements of the parties. This enables them a private conversation with the mediator.Therefore, the Gandhian model of peer mediation is targeted at building better educational systems and brighter individuals while letting students enjoy the growth process without stress and negativity.

Unit 4.3: The Gandhian Peer Mediator

A Peer mediator in Gandhian paradigm shall be a Satyagrahi aiming at establishing a nonviolent, peaceful order in the society. He/ She shall therefore possess all the traits necessary for satyagrahasuch as:

1.   Truthful: Truth to Gandhi is the ultimate of goal of human existence. Mediation is nothing but encouraging parties towards acceptance of truth. This can be done by a person who believes in truth as a cardinal principal of human behaviour.

2.   Respectful: A Gandhian peer mediator should be respectful towards the parties and their sentiments as well expectations.

2.   Nonviolent: A peer mediator should denounce violence in all its forms such as physical force, profane language, hatred, destruction of public property, feelings of resentment and so on.

3.   Brave: One who has even a tinge of fear in his being cannot resist injustice. A peer mediator needs to purge one's soul of all fears and feel the tranquillity before attempting mediation.

4.   Self-scrutiny: An understanding of self helps in finding the inner strength to go through the process of mediation.

5.   Motivated by love and care: Peer mediators should act out of love and care for the parties. A change of perspective requires deep concern for peace. This also is known as having a mediation mindset.

6.   Optimistic: A peer mediator is not just a problem solver but a motivator, uplifter and awakener. S/he needs to inculcate positive values and sentiments in the disputants.

7.   Non-judgemental: Prejudices complicate situations and obstruct the way to reconciliation. By being non-judgemental a peer mediator can ensure the parties reflect on their actions.

8.   Honesty: Only earnest endeavours result in desired outcomes. A peer mediator should whole heartedly attempt mediation to make it successful.

9.   For Gandhi, human beings were the most important and every individual could realize one's humanity and relate it to others. Parekh (1997) notes, *"Gandhi thought that by bringing to his every activity the 'sweet smell of humanity', every person could in his small way help transform the quality of human relationships and contribute to the creation of a better world."* Hence, the Gandhian peer mediator will have strong commitment to the essence of humanity.

A Gandhian Peer mediator needs to be highly disciplined in approach and also have multi-partial outlook. Training students into Gandhian art of mediation is about raising dutiful and responsible citizens, it certainly requires a lot more effort than mere dispute resolution ability. To quote Gandhi; "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" and this is what a peer mediator is expected to do.

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EXERCISES IN PEER MEDIATION

Q1. Are conflicts bad? Do they affect human behaviour? How can one constructively resolve them through dialogues?

Q2. What is healthy communication? Discuss its essentials.

Q3. Describe Peer mediation in your own words. Discuss its role in educational institutions.

Q4. What do you understand by nonviolent communication? Why do you think it is an essential skill in Peer Mediation?

Q5. Discuss the essential qualities of a peer mediator in light of the Gandhian approach to Conflict Resolution.

Q6. How the process of mediation is made 'peer friendly' through the Gandhian model of peer mediation?

Q7. Amit was building a home out of blocks when his sister Sakshi knocked it over. So later, Amit wouldn't let Sakshi play ludo with him. How as a peer mediator would you help Amit and Sakshi in identifying their conflict goals and find a mutually agreeable solution to resolve this conflict.

All participants are requested to mail their answers to: icgsr.mediation@gmail.com