Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture - 10
Types of Conflicts: Becoming a Conflict Resolution Expert

Hello everyone, welcome back to NPTEL's MOOC course on *Developing Soft Skills and Personality*. I am Ravichandran from IIT, Kanpur. I am giving you this course for the past two weeks and then we are already on module 4 and lecture number 10. This week particularly, I have been focusing more on conflict resolutions skills, you might be wondering why, in the last week, if you looked at it I was using one lecture for one concept, but this is one concept and I have brought it up to 4 lectures and this is the last lecture.

In fact, that I am going to conclude about conflict resolution skills, but then if you wonder why I am spending this much time, you should note that this is one skill, if developed well—conflict resolution skill—can make you very highly demanded not only in the professional circle, but also in the personal circle. People will come to you, they will look forward to you whenever there is a conflict. They would like you to come and resolve their conflicts and by resolving their conflicts you are also maintaining a harmonious relationship with those people and you are also strengthening and building up your personality.

This is one skill that everybody is looking for in a person and it determines your level of personality whether you are a good leader or not, whether you are a overall good person who can use this to excel yourself, everything is determined by this that is the reason why I have been spending so much time on this. So in this unit let us look at some of the types of conflicts and some of the types in which they try to resolve the conflicts. Now, before we go as I do every time let us look at some quick highlights of what we did in the last lecture.

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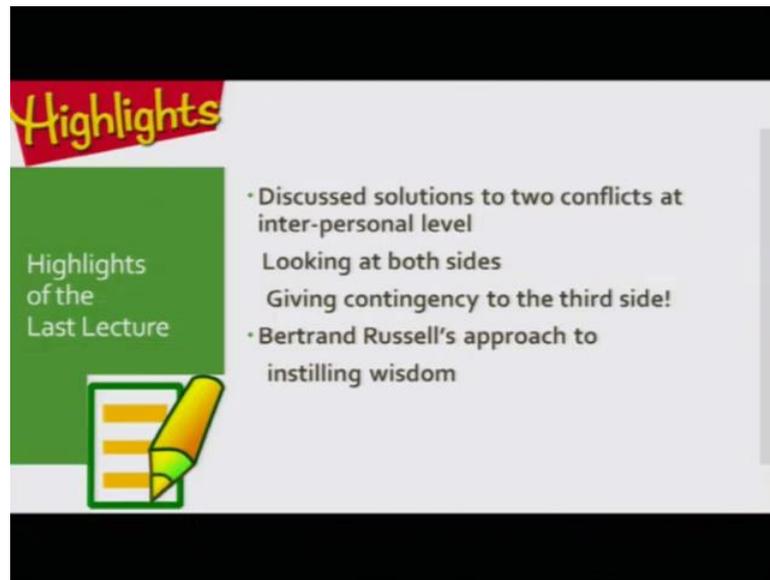
We discussed some solutions to two conflicts at inter personal level, one was between a father and son and other was between a couple who were married out of love, but then who are about to reach the point of break, that is, divorce. Now, I try to tell you that you should be looking at both sides, but at the same time you should be able to give contingency to the third side also. And I also highlighted that you should keep in your mind what Bertrand Russell mentioned in his very famous essay "Knowledge and Wisdom" about the way he will try to install wisdom in people, especially, in inter personal conflicts by making each other write the merits, particularly, demerits if they hate each other, and then try to exchange the notes with the persons.

So, I suggested in a different manner as how you can use it in inter-personal relationships and then try to install not only in those people also in your own mind. Now, apart from this are there other simple ways in which we can resolve conflicts. Now, there are other simple ways like if you **emphasize need**, if you tell people that you actually need this instead of fighting or demanding for a solution from those people, instead of telling them that you give me this solution, if you say that *this is what I need* if you emphasize your need instead of putting people in a conflict. So most of the times people tend to help you to give you that kind of need or facilitate that the need is satisfied.

Now, look at some examples which I consider as other simple ways of resolving conflicts. Now, this side if somebody is demanding solution—let us say this is a scenario between a sister and brother. This sister—the scenario is that her brother is playing music loudly and dancing with his friends maybe in the adjacent room and then it is troubling her so much. She comes and then she has lost her patience and then she shouts at them and she says: *"Monkeys! Can't you go out and jump and babble on trees, I need a peaceful atmosphere!"* Now, brother, obviously says: *"You goose we are just freaking out can't you see, you can find a peaceful place yourself."*

Now, the same scenario can be changed if the sister actually emphasized her need and then made the other parties understand why they should retain calmness for her. Look at the other way in which it could be changed, the sister goes and then says, *hi guys* and then says, *nice music*, but however, or *yet I need a quite atmosphere because I am preparing for my exam tomorrow*, just telling them the need. And then the brother and his friends, so most likely they are likely to say this, we will leave soon and you can work in peace just we are winding up, we are just concluding.

Now, what changed the scenario? In the previous one, she didn't tell them what is her need and then she put her anger first and then she burst out and then she just made them react quickly to the way she burst out with emotion. In the other one she controlled her emotion and then she tried to make them realize that *okay, you are enjoying music fine,*

but my need is this. So she actually gave them a chance to help her fulfill her need in most of the scenario.

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If you are able to put emphasis on need, but not on demanding a solution, things will work out. Look at another situation between husband and wife, wife to her husband: *I like it calm, can't you switch off the TV and do something meaningful?*

Now, husband, *but my favourite program is going on, it will take time, why don't you go upstairs?* Now, here she demanded a solution that he should do something meaningful other than watching the TV. Now, in terms of emphasizing need, look at the way the same scenario can be changed—wife says *to do my yoga I need a calm place*, maybe she *adds a dear or honey* and then says this.

Now, husband can give one of the following reactions, if the need is emphasized he can say *simply okay dear, I will switch off the TV and read that novel I leave you at peace*. Second, he can say *I will use the Bluetooth headphone*; so that again the room will remain calm, but I just listen it is a kind of win-win. The third one, he says, *I will just leave for jogging now*, so that is also possible. Fourth one, he says, *never mind I can watch the program on the internet later I am just closing it for you*. Now, all are possible provided you emphasize the need.
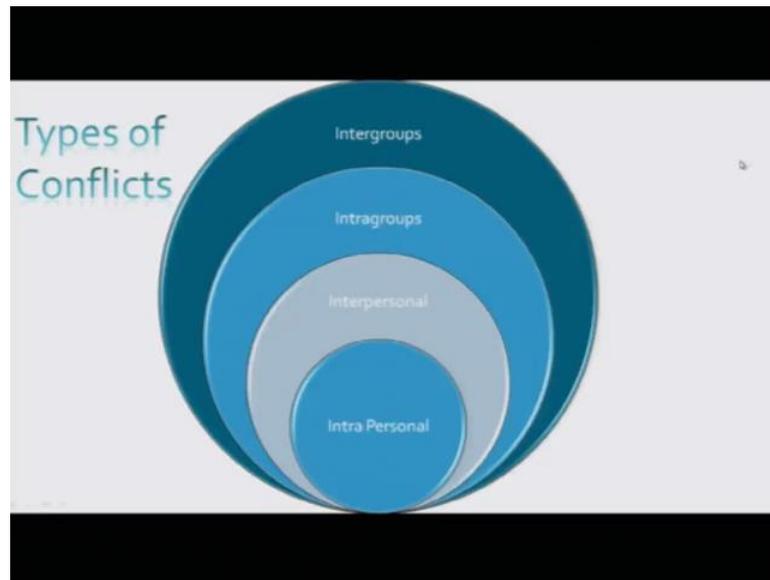
So without trying other aspects of conflict resolutions, now, *what kind of conflicts generally we face in our life? How can we look at them?* Now there are like about 6-8 ways people look into conflicts, but I would say that you can bring all of them into four categories, the inner most one is **the intrapersonal**, that is, the conflict that happens *within*. I am going to explain this soon, but it is *between me and myself*, *I and me,* okay, this conflict. **Interpersonal:** *I with somebody*, *some other person, I with my friends, I with my enemies, I with my boss, I with my colleagues* and so on—interpersonal.

Intragroup, that is, *group and within a group*. So, one group of people, but within the group there are fractions. There are differences of opinion leading to conflicts. Intergroups as in different kind of corporate environment, where two companies are fighting with each other, Samsung and Apple. Or even small companies, the local ones, two shops which are opposite to each other and then they fighting for their clients. This is intergroup; between two groups. Now, intra is within the same group, interpersonal is between two personal relations, intra personal is within the one-self.

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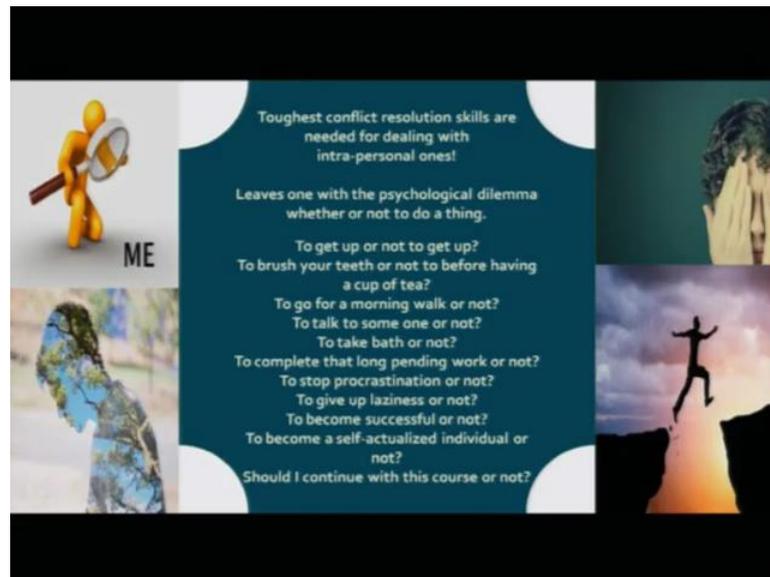
Now, you might be asking like which one is the toughest kind of battle that we need to win. Needless to say that the toughest conflict resolution skills are needed for dealing with intra personal ones, that is, the conflicts which are happening within. From the time you get up till you go to sleep there are so many intra conflicts. Look at some of the ones that you have in mind often it leaves you with the psychological dilemma whether or not to do a thing.

So it is there in a mind should you do that or not you keep asking this, look at some of the examples that I have put. To get up or not get up? To get up after the alarm rings or just stop it? And then the sleep for some more time? To get up at this time or not to get up? After getting up, to brush your teeth or not to before having a cup of tea or not to brush that day at all because you want to save more time on sleeping. To go for a morning walk or not? These are conflicts that you need to resolve. To talk to someone or not? To take bath or not, especially, during winter? So, to take bath or not? Should I do that or not to complete that long pending work or not? To stop procrastination or not? Okay. Should I keep on procrastination or should I stop it? To give up laziness or not?

In fact, I tell you that this is the toughest fight that you need to resolve, especially, if you want to develop your personality and then reach that level of excellence that David McClelland and then Maslow are talking about. If you want to reach that level you actually need to give up your laziness at some point or other as the process . . .

progressing you decide that you will stop it. I hope most of you have given up laziness by this time, and then, even questions like to become successful or not. Some people are really afraid of success, some people are afraid of fame, some people especially think that *oh! if I become famous I will be surrounded by so many people*.

So I will have no time for myself. So let me not become famous, let me not become successful and then the final question about one's own self to become a self-actualized individual or not. I have been telling you that become the self-actualized individual only then you will have real inner happiness, but then still you will be doubting yourself: *should I do that or not*? And if I have to do then I have to do lot of things. So should I be really doing that and even question simple questions like *should I continue with this course or not*?

These are thoughts that come to you in the form of conflicts and then every time you are fighting with them and you are trying to resolve them, and then sometimes, it becomes so philosophic, so big as like you could see in the character of Shakespeare's Hamlet, the famous phrase "to be or not to be" that is the question he says, that is the ultimate form of psychological conflict whether to live or not to live in the kind of struggles that he is surrounded with.

Now, *why do people see conflicts in a negative frame, negative perspective*? And, should you see conflicts in a negative one, obviously, you know that I would say no and I want to look at conflicts from a very positive point of view and why people look at it and why do you look at that way and why shouldn't you look at it that way.

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Anger, first of all if you look at it, we don't want anybody to get angry, we don't like somebody's face when they are angry. Smile, you know increases the face value, but then anger when you see somebody, it is the . . . like the most ugliest form of face, they will have when they are angry.
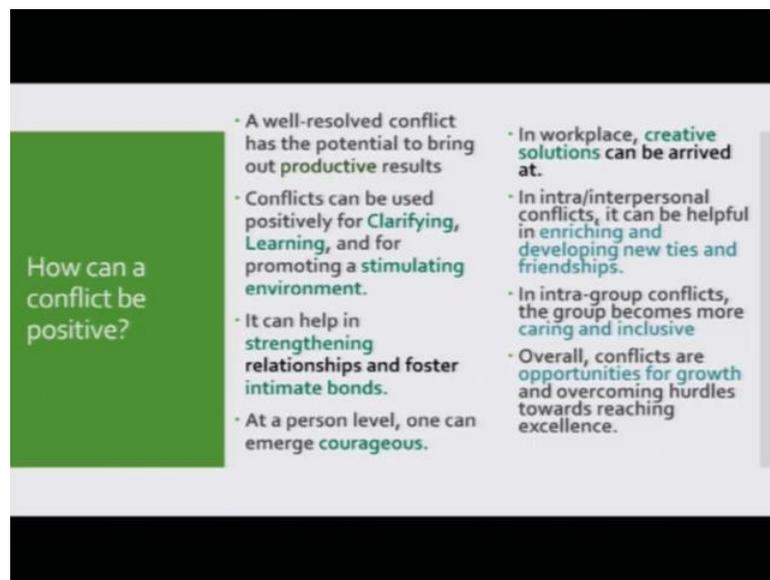
Now, when a person gets angry, he or she intimidates others. Especially, if you are in emotional network and when you see the person getting angry all others are put off, they don't want to even say something. They are afraid. Now in family setup let us see an angry father threatens to beat the mother, now children become very anxious. So, they become psychological repressed, they are not even able to express their views should they go and defend the mother, should they go and fight with the father, but then even his presence and shouting and showing anger, it intimidates people.

Now, other people are rather afraid because they sort of perceive conflicts as kind of psychological threats, some kind of threatening situation they think that every time a conflict arises. So they try to avoid it, and then, people generally don't like disagreements. How many times you have actually liked a person who kept on disagreeing with you, who kept on arguing with you. So usually people will lose their love and affection to those who keep disagreeing with them constantly and they will either avoid those people or turn hostile after sometime. Sometime they will completely stop those people who disagree with the others.

So disagreement is fine, but then after disagreement there should be a gentle agreement and the restoring of the harmony that is there in the relationship. But if disagreement per se somebody is doing at, so then it is not advisable and that is another reason why people think that whenever there is a conflict it is a disagreement and then we should not be liking it. This is general perception of conflict and it is quiet valid also. But as a participant of this course who is trying to develop his or her personality and then use this to change your entire inner core, I would say that look at conflict as something positive instead of looking at conflict as something negative.

Now, how can you look at conflict as a positive thing? First understand that a well resolved conflict has the potential to bring out protective results, whether it is in a company set up, whether it is in a job environment, or even in a family setup that's working as a team, the results will be productive. It will be highly productive if it is a win-win situation.

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Conflicts can be used positively for clarifying. Clarifying miscommunication, clarifying misunderstanding, and if you are the proactive kind of person you will learn from that. And you will not only learn from that and then you will also pay way for promoting a stimulating environment. So communication channels will be open when you are able to clarify, learn from that and then you are able to stimulate a very positive communicative environment. It can help in strengthening relationships.

At the end of a conflict, like last time we discussed, it will always lead to a strengthening of relationship and it can foster intimate bonds. You can never say that these people are living a very happy and deeply understanding life and relationship, but they never quarrelled in their life at all. No, it is the people who quarrel frequently, it is the people who are in conflict with each other frequently and they resolve it. If they leave it unresolved, it can go to any damaging situation like divorce or even committing suicide or all kind of violent and damaging activities.

But on the other hand, if they are able to help each other to resolve the conflicts, even though it appears that they are deliberately creating conflicts, but at the end of it, it will foster intimate bonds. At a personal level, when you are able to resolve some conflict you can emerge courageous. In a workplace, creative solutions can be arrived at. Most of the times, when you use brain storming in a workplace you will come out with many interesting ideas out of the box thinking, but which never came until the conflicts became a kind of source for sitting together in the name of fighting, but in the name of fighting, you actually came out with new innovative solutions in intra inter-personal conflicts.

It can be helpful in enriching and developing new ties and friendships. In intra group conflicts, the group becomes more caring and inclusive say, for example, they within the group there is some 2-3 people, the group is not considering, but after the conflict, they understand those three for better and then they become more caring and including. Whatever they do, they start including them in their activities. Overall, conflicts are opportunities for growth and overcoming hurdles towards reaching excellence. Use conflicts, resolve them, and then reach excellence.

Now, let us look at some types of conflicts resolvers or what kind of person that you are in terms of resolving a conflict.

Generally large number of people would like to avoid conflicts. The **avoiding** types— either they are shy, they are introverts, or may be simply they are just peace makers. They don't always want people not to fight with each other. They always want to live in a kind of harmonious surroundings. So they just avoid it, they don't even want to talk about it. The other type is **accommodating**; slightly better than avoiding. They are accommodative, they are unassertive, they don't put their viewpoints, they are co-operative, they want the conflict to be resolved first and they put relationships first because they don't want to hurt the other person who is involved in the conflict.

The opposite type is the **attacking** type; the aggressive, the powerful, the dominating one, who will use power sometimes to control—the boss over the worker, even teacher over student, husband over wife, and sometimes even wife over husband, depending on the power struggle.

Collaborating—Now, the people who are interested in collaborating or the assertive and cooperative types, but then, they seek win-win solutions. They collaborate so that they can arrive at win-win solutions. Normally this mode is advisable, but then, you also have people who are in the **competing** mode that is *win-lose* mode I will win, but you will lose. So I will not cooperate with you because I want you to lose and by cooperating with you my own concerns are getting abolished. I don't want that to happen.

And then, there is one more type, that is, the **compromising** type that is the person is willing to give up, lose something, and then even if the other person is compromising, both are in lose-lose situation, sacrificing, seeking harmony again, but then in a sense that it's not going to lead further, growth, it's still the status quo till another conflicts comes.

Now, if you ask which one is the best, again it depends on the context, it depends on the person because there are occasions when it is better that even if you are not a shy and introvert person, even if you are the attacking type it is better to avoid certain conflicts. Especially, they say that conflicts with boss and then if the boss is too aggressive. So there is no point in fighting with the boss, as they say—*the boss is always right* and then the second rule says that *when in doubt you go and look at the first rule*. So that is happening in most of the environment, where it is authoritative and where it is quite conservative. Where it is better to avoid it, but then if you think that you are the attacking type, if you think that all the time you are attacking, try sometimes using accommodative type, most of the times try to collaborate, try to arrive at a win-win situation. And then if you think that you are in the competing type, that you always think that I should win and somebody should lose, so try to change the modality, try to change the situation by changing your resolving type of conflicts. Now, all of us try to resolve the conflicts, but then keep in mind that we should try to arrive at win-win solution, we should be most of the times collaborating, we should be assertive, but at the same time, cooperative and we should try to seek win-win solution.

Now, towards the concluding of this one, this particular 4 lectures on conflict resolution. So, some quick tips and suggestions that I would to like to give in your day today life as how you can deal with conflicts, what should be the attitude that you should have. I would suggest that you should resolve conflicts so that you become a conflict resolution expert.

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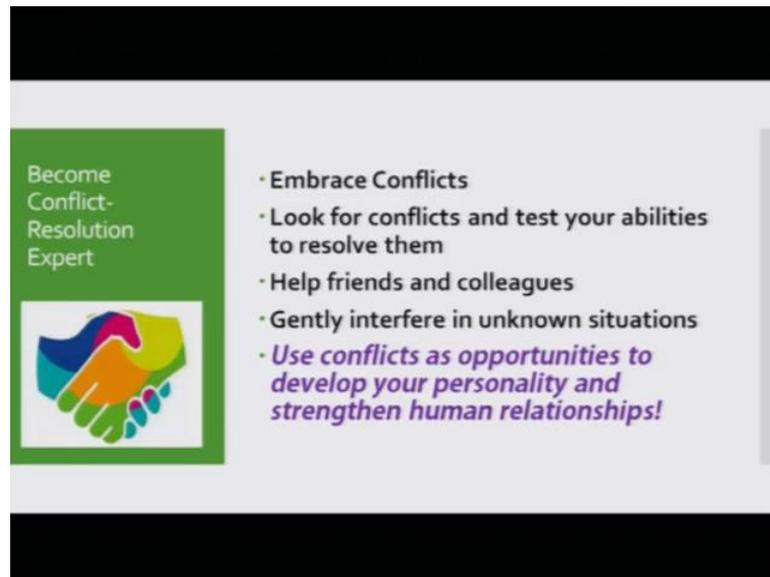
How do you do that? Embrace conflicts; don't run away from conflicts, look for conflicts. So wherever conflicts are there you try to find out a kind of favourable solution to all concerned. And then whenever you look for a conflict test your abilities to resolve them. And at the end of it, try to reflect on the way that you have resolved the conflict: How did I resolve this conflict? Did I do it in an attacking manner? Did I use my power to control kids? Did I use my emotional power to control my friends? How did I do this? Did I compete and did I go for win-lose situation? How did you resolve the conflicts and then did you ever collaborate and then try to reach this win-win situation?

Then once you try to master your level of conflict resolution, try to help your friends and colleagues. Like, let people know you as a person, who is excelling in conflict resolution. Try to develop that skill. And then, even in unknown situations—like when you are walking on a road or there is a quarrel in neighbourhood, quarrel on the street, and then, boss has some problem with somebody, you just offer to talk to the concerned people, and then, ask and then find out whether you can resolve the conflict on their behalf. So what I mean to say is gently interfere even in unknown situations. Don't just become a passive observer and run away from that, even if there is a conflict which is also combined with fight people are fighting with each other, even if you go and then try to talk in a polite manner, people are not going to beat you most of the times.

So you can take a risk and then see how your resolution is trying to work out and go back to the previous lesson, use some of the general process and methods which are been told to you like get the facts first, use empathy, listen to both sides and then give contingency to the third side and all that, with that you will be able to resolve that and remember all the time that you can use conflicts as opportunities to develop your personality and strengthen human relationships.

So with this, I conclude the lectures on conflict resolution. I hope you enjoyed these lectures, but more than enjoying I wish that you learn how to resolve conflicts in your life. If you are always using somebody to take help for resolving your conflicts, stop that and then try to develop the inner ability in you to resolve conflicts. Believe in you, believe all the time that you can go for a win-win situation. And most importantly, as I was telling you, use the conflicts which are within to develop your personality. The toughest thing to resolve is actually the conflicts which are within the intra personal conflicts.

Now, there are more things with regard to intra personal conflicts such as like managing, time, managing hygiene, managing work place. Managing, even for example, certain habits that you have accumulated and made them as bad. And then how to overcome some of these things, how to avoid stress. Now, all are related to this, some of which we will also in a phased manner look at in this course, but now that time I am just trying to give you tips and then try to train you as a kind of expert, try to resolve it at your own level also.

Thank you so much for watching this video. I will get back with a new lesson in the next video.