

Developing Soft Skills and Personality
Prof. T. Ravichandran
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture – 09
Inter-Personal Conflicts: Two Solutions

Hai! Welcome back to the MOOC NPTEL course on *Developing Soft Skills and Personality*. I am Ravichandran, I am with you for this course throughout. I am a Professor of English from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kanpur.

So, how was the day yesterday? Yesterday, I left you with two examples for conflict resolution. Were you able to work out the examples? I suggested that you should be able to working out, coming with solutions, based on the tips that I had given. Before I start giving you the solution, let us quickly look at the highlights of the previous lecture. In the previous lecture, I actually told you as how you can resolve conflicts. I also told you that you should not be praying to god that your life should be without any conflicts rather you should be asking god to give you strength and soft skills to actually resolve the conflicts. Instead of thinking that I will be peaceful if there are no conflicts you need to think that you should have the ability to sort out this conflict and only then you will be peaceful.

And in doing that, I was telling you that, unlike the corporate kind of approach, I suggested always aim at a Win-Win approach. Now to aim at a Win-Win approach I also told you that try to look at both sides. In any conflict there are two sides, and there is also a third side, and sometimes more than three sides. Now you should be able to look at the things out of the box which the partners who are involved in conflicts are not able to see. And at the same time, you should always give contingency to the third option that is possible.

I also talked to you about the conflict resolution skills in general and the process that you should be using if you want to resolve any conflicts.

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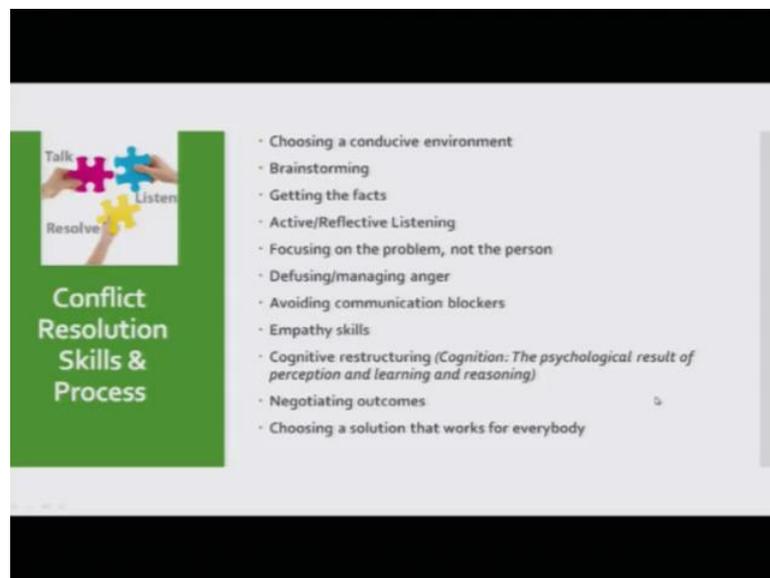
Highlights

Highlights of the Last Lecture

- Resolving Conflicts—
 - Looking at both sides
 - Giving contingency to the third side!
 - Conflict Resolution Skills & Process
- Two Conflict Situations
 1. Husband-Wife
 2. Father-Son

In that context again I gave you two conflict situations, two small anecdotes; one conflict that happened between husband and wife, the other one that happened between father and son.

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Conflict Resolution Skills & Process

- Choosing a conducive environment
- Brainstorming
- Getting the facts
- Active/Reflective Listening
- Focusing on the problem, not the person
- Defusing/managing anger
- Avoiding communication blockers
- Empathy skills
- Cognitive restructuring (*Cognition: The psychological result of perception and learning and reasoning*)
- Negotiating outcomes
- Choosing a solution that works for everybody

I hope you remember that in order to solve the conflicts some of the points that I told you like you should choose a conducive environment, you should try to do brainstorming, you should get the facts first before actually trying to sort out this thing, you should go

for active listening, you should focus on the problem not the person. You should try to defuse, manage anger. If they are angry you should actually try to make them feel cool before you actually start negotiating with them. You should avoid communication blockers. You should use your empathy skills, if you are part of the conflict you should empathize with the other person and then you should try to go for cognitive restructuring; you should try to restructure the entire thing through a logical and perceptual manner.

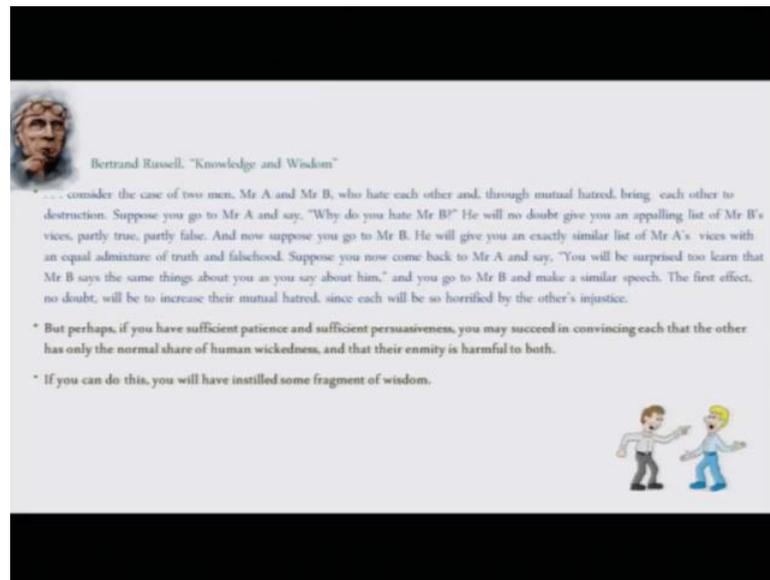
Giving contingency to the fact that there will be perceptual errors and you try to point out to the concerned person like how the perceptual thing can be restructured in a such manner that they try to see the reality they try to understand the truth. And then you should negotiate the outcomes with them and then you try to choose a solution that is working for everybody that is favourable to all.

Now I gave you two situations; the first one is between a husband and wife and again both are examples for interpersonal conflicts between two people. And in both these cases we call them as *affective conflicts* that means, the emotional conflicts which are very risky and then very dangerous to deal with, but if you don't deal with that they can explode like time bomb and then cause complete damage to the relationship so much so that you will not able to bridge it after that.

Now in the both cases that I gave, the first one say between the husband and the wife you know that they are a very loving couple and then the conflict has started. How did you work out the conflicts? I told you to look at this and then come out with some suggestions, some solutions. Did you try to analyze that and then try to use the suggestions, process, that I told you? And then how do you have stopped this couple from being getting divorced. Did you think of that?

Now if I were to do, I would have started like this. But before telling you my step by step method in which I would have started working out the process of resolving the conflict, I want you to have in mind one interesting and important idea that was discussed by Bertrand Russell although it is not an essay on conflict resolution, but there is a very interesting anecdote that he shares with us which actually tells us how you can pin down any conflicts and then resolve it very easily.

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Bertrand Russell, interestingly if you know, he is the person who is a renowned philosopher, mathematician. He fought for peace, but he also got married thrice, and then he got divorced thrice, and in the fourth time, when he got married, he also wrote this famous book *Marriage and Morals*, and incidentally, he won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Now, such a dynamic personality who has undergone so many conflicts and then who is full of knowledge and wisdom and it is worth reading the entire essay, "Knowledge and Wisdom," if you want to develop your soft skills towards resolving conflicts. But at this stage, I will just focus on 1 part, 1 episode, 1 anecdote that he talks about. So let me just briefly narrate that for you and then I want you to apply the same thing to the two cases that I have discussed or any such case that you will come across in life.

Look at this: he says, consider the case of two men. So, he doesn't want to name them he says Mr. A and Mr. B, who hate each other and through mutual hatred bring each other to destruction. Suppose, you go to Mr. A and say, "Why do you hate Mr. B?" He will no doubt give you an appalling list or Mr. B's vices. So all bad things about Mr. B, A will be giving you a list. Now Russell says it is partly true, but partly false. You might also know that because B always tries to look at the faults of others and we tend to exaggerate them. Over looking our own faults, so he says that now suppose you go to Mr. B he will

give you an exactly similar list of Mr. A's vices with an equal admixture of truth and falsehood. Okay.

So you have collected two lists one from A one from B, but both is not completely true but then it is completely talking about the vices of the other persons. Now suppose you now come back to Mr. A and say, "You will be surprised to learn that Mr. B says the same things about you as you say about him," and you go to Mr. B and make a similar speech. The first effect, no doubt, will be to increase the mutual hatred they will initially feel that *oh he is saying so many bad things about me* so the hatred increases, since each will be so horrified by the others injustice. "How could he say that about me? I am not like that, he is like that." That is the initial response.

But perhaps, if you have sufficient patience and sufficient persuasiveness, you may succeed in convincing each that the other has only the normal share of human wickedness and that their enmity is harmful to both. Meaning, all human beings have this good side and the bad side, the vices, and then, the virtues. If you tell them that it is normal that any human being will have this kind of limitations, which you have been exaggerating, so it will be possible for the other person to realize that enmity for both is going to be very harmful and then you will be able to bring harmony in the relationship.

There is an interesting tip that he gives about conflict resolution although as I said he does not directly talk about that. And he says if you can do this, you will have instilled some fragment of wisdom in you in those people also. Remember, at the end of each conflict resolution you are becoming wiser and wiser and happier and happier also.

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Inter-personal Conflict: Solution 1

- Choosing a conducive environment
Invite Shilpa & Kishore to your home, or a picnic to their favourite place, restaurant
- Defusing/managing anger
Make them play games (Truth or Dare), give them a team task (doubles in tennis)
- Brainstorming
May not work, if they are not willing to participate
- Getting the facts (Russell Method)
Make them list out five things they like in each other; and five they dislike;
Gs: Why did you marry against opposition? Why don't you share the problems at job? What do you do at home? How do you feel in the long absence of Kishore?
- Active/Reflective Listening
Listen to what they have to tell about each other and who triggered the conflict
- Focusing on the problem, not the person
Identify how you can stop the divorce; do not takes sides or approve of one-sided blames

Now, go back to the first conflict that I discussed, I suggested that in order to resolve any conflict if possible to the extent possible try to choose a conducive environment. Instead of the place in which where they are fighting try to take them outside somewhere. In this case since you are the neighbour for Shilpa and Kishore, you invite them to your home on a weekend, on a time when they are relaxed, or even you create a birthday party for you, and then invite them specially. Or if you know that they enjoy going out for a picnic and there is a favourite place that Shilpa wants to go and then Kishore has not been taking her for a long time, so you just arrange it. Convince Kishore to take her with you and then you just go there. Or you take them to a favourite restaurant where they want to eat good food.

Now, select the environment that is favourable for such a talk. Now when you take them there, you need to defuse or reduce their anger so when they start talking to each other sometimes there are likely to blame each other and their anger is likely to flare up. You need to defuse this. How could you do? We can make them play games; in fact, there are books on conflict resolution games—100 games, 200 games. But then, between 2 partners or 2 persons, 2 loving couples so what you can do is you can make them play the simple game like truth or dare. So, may be you have dice or something and then every time somebody's chance comes either the person has to speak the truth or dare to do something that what the other partners will tell.

Now in this case actually they will be able to get the truth out from each other whenever their turn comes. We can also give them a team task for example, you can call somebody else with you to play doubles in a tennis and then you can make them as team partners. Now this will help them again to cooperate and coordinate so that there is a feeling that they should try to win. Okay. So, this is another thing that you can do.

Brainstorming may not work if they are not willing to join in a group and then talk about each other, but then you can get the facts by using the method that is suggested by Russell. You can ask some to make a list of things. Now in this case, not only the things that they hate each other, but you can ask them to list out 5 things they like in each other and 5 they dislike. You say that its compulsory they should mention and if possible you can tell them to prioritize; what is it that you like most in your husband and same thing, what is he liking most in Shilpa and vice versa.

And then, you can also add some common questions to both like, *why did you marry against opposition? The parents didn't want you to get married, but why did you both decide to live together, what made you join together?* So, this will help them to think those glorious moments in which they really loved each other. And then you also ask them questions like why don't you share the problems at job, particularly to Kishore. You find out why he is not able to do that, why he is reluctant to explain what is happening to him in the job.

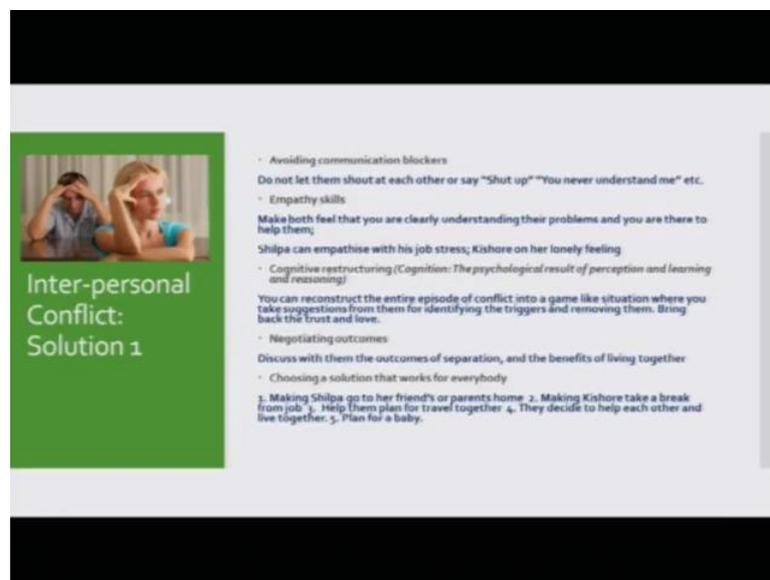
The answers that he will give will be really revelatory to Shilpa because either there is a stress or there is something so annoying that he is feeling that he should not share it with her thinking that it might hurt her so much. Maybe he has performed so badly, maybe he is incurring some loss and then he doesn't want her to lose confidence in him. And it is annoying himself, but he doesn't want to tell it to her.

Now to Shilpa, you can ask questions like what do you do at home, how do you feel in the long absence of Kishore, how do you manage—like is it just watching the TV that is sufficient or are you doing something, are you taking a part time job, are you doing a course, are you interested in some hobby? So these kinds of questions like even Kishore might not know what she is doing in his absence. Now as suggested by Russell, you can exchange the list, with their permission, without their permission, depending upon the level of stress that is there at the time and then show to each other that look at the five

points. That shows that both of you are actually still in love with each other, but you are not liking each other because of the recent behavioural changes which have happened may be due to certain circumstances. And then, you bring them together and find out what could be the circumstances, what made them loose trust in each other, what made particularly Kishore become uncommunicative.

Now do the active reflective listening. Listen to what they have to tell about each other and who triggered the conflict. Now again here focus on the problem not the person. Whoever has done it first—Shilpa: don't join Kishore and say that *oh it is Shilpa who did it so*. Do not blame her and vice versa. If it is Kishore so do not join her and do not blame him. You are not there to blame anybody. But you are there to focus on the problem; the problem here is the relationship has reached such a conflict and stressful situation where they have reached upto the level of divorce. Now how are you going to stop this? So do not take sides or approve of one sided blames, but then try to show that you are actually very empathetic person.

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The slide is titled "Inter-personal Conflict: Solution 1" and features a photograph of a man and a woman in a tense conversation. The text on the slide provides several strategies for resolving conflict:

- Avoiding communication blockers
- Do not let them shout at each other or say "Shut up" "You never understand me" etc.
- Empathy skills
- Make both feel that you are clearly understanding their problems and you are there to help them;
- Shilpa can empathise with his job stress; Kishore on her lonely feeling
- Cognitive restructuring (Cognition: The psychological result of perception and learning and reasoning)
- You can reconstruct the entire episode of conflict into a game like situation where you take suggestions from them for identifying the triggers and removing them. Bring back the trust and love.
- Negotiating outcomes
- Discuss with them the outcomes of separation, and the benefits of living together
- Choosing a solution that works for everybody
- 1. Making Shilpa go to her friend's or parents home 2. Making Kishore take a break from job 3. Help them plan for travel together 4. They decide to help each other and live together. 5. Plan for a baby.

And before doing that if they are making some kind of communication blocks, for example, they lose the temper and start shouting at each other or when one is talking the other one says *shut up! you loud mouth, you always speak like this, you never know anything*, and then the famous dialogue: *you never understand me*. Now these kind of things are actually communication blockers and then that will not let you progress. So

you have to stop them very gently, politely, and you have to make them realize that you are there for solution not for creating problem.

Use your empathy skills; use also those skills to make them realize it is important that they also empathize with each other. Make both feel that you are clearly understanding the problems and you are there to help them. Now Shilpa can empathize with his job stress, whatever it is, and Kishore needs to empathize on Shilpa's lonely feeling. And then go for cognitive restructuring.

Now, you can restructure the entire episode of conflict that you can just tell them slowly once they are trusting you, tell them like how they started stopping . . . with each other, it might have triggered one small trivial thing. Now you can make that into a game like situation and then you can ask them their suggestions to identify more triggers and you can even ask them how if you are really loving and if you are willing to forgive and forget this thing, how you would have changed this point. So at this point, you lost your temper you got angry, but if you would didn't get angry, so, how you would have sorted out this situation.

And finally, you negotiate the outcomes with them. Now discuss with them the outcomes of separation. It is not going to benefit both; Kishore's stress, job stress, will make him much more miserable. And in case of Shilpa, if she cannot live with somebody who loved her and then left the family and came there and then joined her and then made her feel very happy in a very metropolitan kind of environment, he was all for her. And then leaving him and finding a different person, new person again is going to create lot of conflict and stress in her life. So, make her understand this.

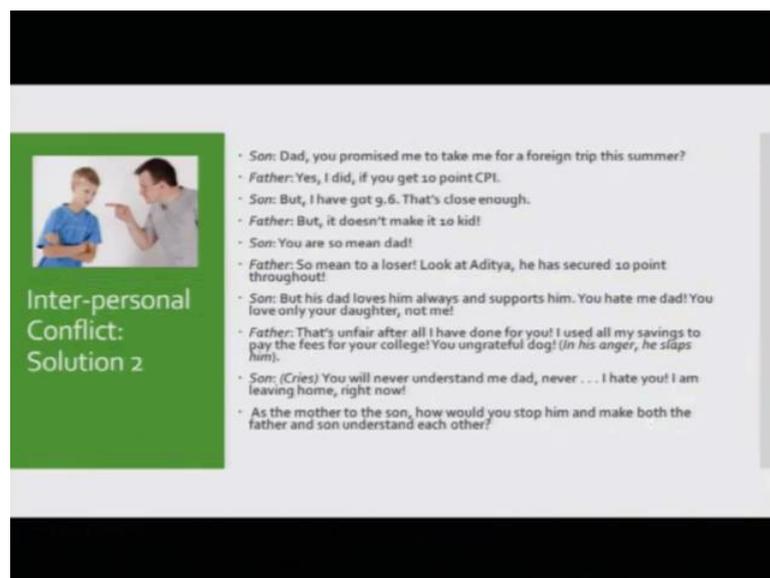
You can also highlight the benefits of living together. You also try to recall some of the incidents in which you can show them some of the video clips that you might be having when they were attending some of the parties. You can show them how nice and how lovable it was for you to look at them, how friendly and how considerate were they, and how all the time they were left to themselves; what happened, what went wrong, why did they change. Recall those things and then make them realize okay, they are really trustworthy and then they are really loving each other, but something in between has actually cost this friction. Now remove that.

Now finally, try to choose a solution that works for everybody. Some solutions could be temporary some solutions could be permanent. Now, temporary solution, if you are not able to resolve it even at that moment, you make Shilpa go to her friends or parents home for some time. Like temporary separation, if she keeps insisting on divorce, temporary separation—that itself will solve the problem. Make Kishore take a break from job and make him spend more time with her. The other option is help them plan for travel together. You just make him take leave make Shilpa get rid of all her household activities, make them go somewhere to a resort or a different place which they have never travelled together, where they will spend time together.

And then finally, you just try to make them realize that they need to decide to help each other, and then, they have to live together. Maybe you can also suggest that they can plan for a baby, it is high time that they plan for a baby because all the conflicts can be resolved when they look at the baby and then they will learn to become more tolerant, more patient, and they learn to give each other.

So this is the way you can sort of sort out the conflict between especially people who are in intimate relationship, but they are in a kind of conflicting situation where they would have actually cost complete damage to the relationship.

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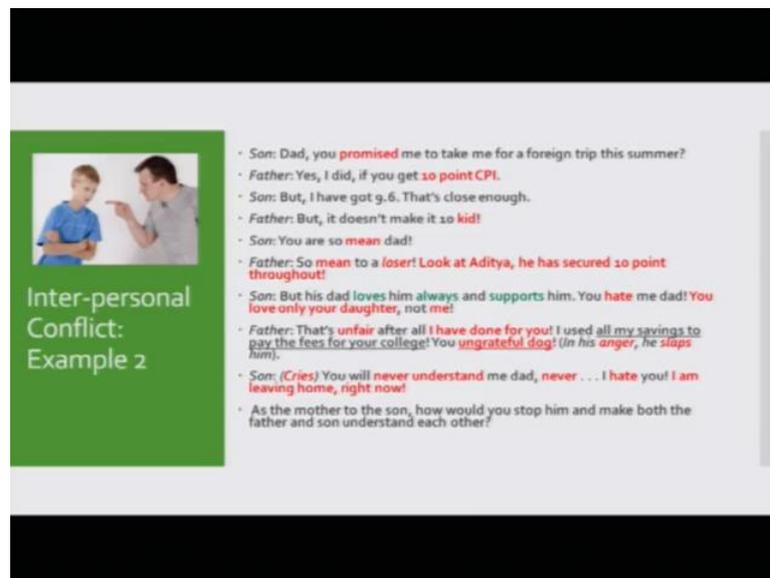


The slide features a green header with the text "Inter-personal Conflict: Solution 2" and a small image of a father and son. Below the header is a list of dialogue lines:

- Son: Dad, you promised me to take me for a foreign trip this summer?
- Father: Yes, I did, if you get 10 point CPI.
- Son: But, I have got 9.6. That's close enough.
- Father: But, it doesn't make it 10 kid!
- Son: You are so mean dad!
- Father: So mean to a loser! Look at Aditya, he has secured 10 point throughout!
- Son: But his dad loves him always and supports him. You hate me dad! You love only your daughter, not me!
- Father: That's unfair after all I have done for you! I used all my savings to pay the fees for your college! You ungrateful dog! (In his anger, he slaps him).
- Son: (Cries) You will never understand me dad, never . . . I hate you! I am leaving home, right now!
- As the mother to the son, how would you stop him and make both the father and son understand each other?

Now a similar situation is happening with regard to the inter-personal conflict between the father and the son. Already you know the background so the dialogue is between going to a summer trip and then the father is not allowing him to do. Now, here, I just want you to analyze this from a different point of view, like seeing in a dialogue what is triggering, what is that conflicting time and what is that break point, how is it happening. And then if you are able to realize that, you will control if you are one of the persons involved in the conflict using such kind of language.

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Inter-personal Conflict: Example 2

- Son: Dad, you **promised** me to take me for a foreign trip this summer?
- Father: Yes, I did, if you get **10 point CPI**.
- Son: But, I have got 9.6. That's close enough.
- Father: But, it doesn't make it **10 kid!**
- Son: You are so **mean** dad!
- Father: So **mean to a loser! Look at Aditya, he has secured 10 point throughout!**
- Son: But his dad loves him always and supports him. You **hate** me dad! **You love only your daughter, not me!**
- Father: That's **unfair** after all I **have done for you!** I used all my savings to pay the fees for your college! You **ungrateful dog!** (In his **anger, he slaps him**).
- Son: (Cries) You will **never understand** me dad, **never . . . I hate you! I am leaving home, right now!**
- As the mother to the son, how would you stop him and make both the father and son understand each other?

Now, look at this dad, you **promised** me. The first thing is there he is putting emphasis that he promised. Now between emotional relationships it is important that you should remain trustworthy if you make a promise you fulfill it, even if it is a very small promise like, *I will give a chocolate, if you pass in this exam*, you need to give it you cannot say that *oh you passed it now let us see next time*, now that will disappoint the child. He promised, but then father says *yeah I promised if you get 10 point CPI*.

Now dad is insisting that okay I will follow my promise provided that you might have got these expected marks. Now he says I got 9.6 and then slowly you see upto here it is not triggering, but then it is like when he says but it doesn't make it 10 **kid**, so even the word kid is slightly provocative here in this context all thought he might not have intended it that way, instead of saying it does not make it 10 **dear; my dear son** it is not 10, but then saying this it is like indicating that oh you immatured boy you don't know

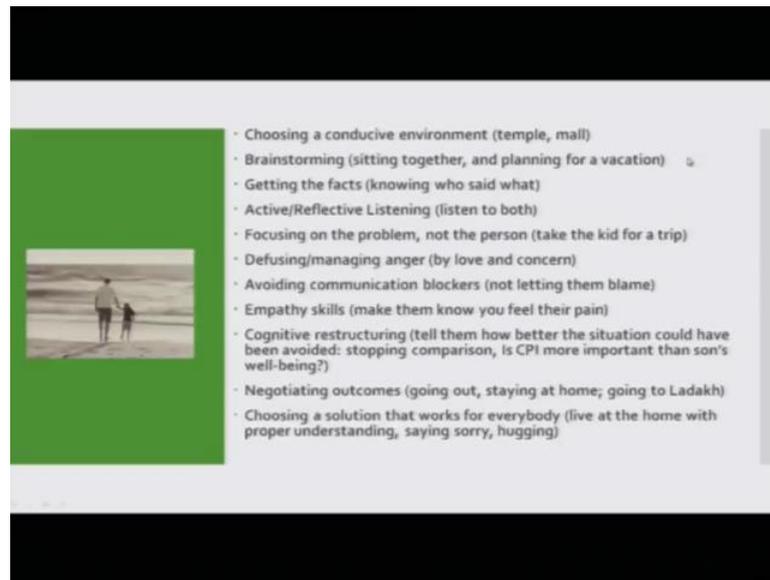
what you are saying it is like that. And then son next he is it is a very small mild provocative but then the son gets provoked further he says, you are so **mean** dad. Mean, he has already accused his daddy. Now the father says, so mean to you **loser**; now he took the accusation and he started blaming him. He says you are the loser and to a loser why should I follow my promise and then I will keep my promise if you have made yours and if you have become a winner.

And then the next worst thing that he is doing is that he is trying to compare him He says that look at Aditya he has secured 10 point throughout. Now, the father should never compare the kid with the other one, which damage he has done, he is just making a comparison. But then the son is also trying to compare at his level, him with the other father, he says, *but his dad loves him and always supports him*; look at the word loves always supports. So, these are positive ones but then here he is saying that by implication *you are not loving me, you are not supporting me* and you are not always like that. And then the next damaging word he says you **hate** me; hate, again another acquisition, another emotionally loaded word.

Now another comparison he is making; he says, *you love only your daughter*. Now this another worst thing that he is accusing him for indiscriminative way of showing love to his own children, and then he says, *not me*. Now the father is feeling that its injustices, after all, to what he has being doing; he says, that is unfair, after all I have done for you. Implying that *I have done so much for you*. I used all my savings to pay the fees for your college. You now . . . the most offensive remark that he is giving **ungrateful dog**; ungrateful itself is worst but then he is using the abusive word also ‘dog’.

And then the next final trigger he gets angry, he is not able to control his emotion. In the anger, impulsively he slaps him, so not only getting angry but also slapping him. Now the son, since he is somewhat submissive, he starts crying. Now this is again an emotional outburst and then he makes the other damaging remark: he says, *you will never understand me dad; never understand, never*. And then, again he continues to say, I hate you, I am leaving home right now; I am leaving home right now and he is about to go.

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- Choosing a conducive environment (temple, mall)
- Brainstorming (sitting together, and planning for a vacation)
- Getting the facts (knowing who said what)
- Active/Reflective Listening (listen to both)
- Focusing on the problem, not the person (take the kid for a trip)
- Defusing/managing anger (by love and concern)
- Avoiding communication blockers (not letting them blame)
- Empathy skills (make them know you feel their pain)
- Cognitive restructuring (tell them how better the situation could have been avoided: stopping comparison, is CPI more important than son's well-being?)
- Negotiating outcomes (going out, staying at home; going to Ladakh)
- Choosing a solution that works for everybody (live at the home with proper understanding, saying sorry, hugging)

I said now if you are the mother how you will stop this guy, and then, how will you do this. Now, choosing a conducive environment here, so you can take them to separate rooms and talk to them separately or you take them together to a favourite place like a temple or a mall where you can sit at a different place calm place and then talk to each other. Now brainstorming: you can sit together and then tell that okay look for daddy it will not be possible for him to take you to somewhere abroad this time because he is in a financial crunch, that is fact. And then you try to tell him that this the situation if you want to you can say his bank balance, but he can take you to some other place. Let us think about it.

And then from your side let us see how you can improve on this situation, do you need a tuition for a particular subject where you have lost marks. Now this is brainstorming trying to gather more ideas and getting the facts; know who said what, like you were not there in the situation. You can tell them probably you should not have said this so that it's triggered his anger and probably you should have also avoided saying this. So, listen to both without being prejudiced.

Focus on the problem like take the kid for a trip that is the problem. The son wants to go for a trip that is the problem. Now, father has aggravated the situation because of his own expected wishes and sometimes . . . like you need to find out why he got angry. Is it just because that his son is not able to perform or is there something inside him. Is he hoping

that some of his unfulfilled dreams are the ones that his son will be able to actualize. Is he trying to correlate that, just tried to find out. And then defuse, manage the anger just by showing your love showing your concern by giving them good food, maybe giving them a pat, giving them a hug, and then avoid communication blockers like not let them blame each other anymore, use the empathy skills make them know that you feel the pain. At the same time make them realize that they should also not start hurting each other like this.

Now in the cognitive restructuring tell them how better the situation could have been avoided, how by stopping the comparison first of all. And then telling the father like when he started comparing with the other kid and then insisting on the CPI telling him that 9.6 and 10 it is not so big a difference, it is almost close. You can make him realize that it is not a big difference and you could actually forgive your kid for that and then try to keep the promise, but if financial thing is an issue so that is a separate problem, so do not combine that with this.

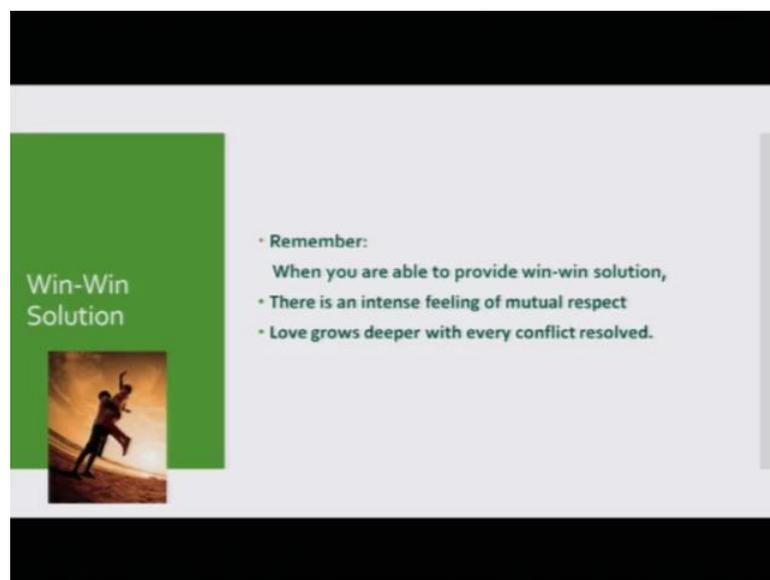
And then you can also make him realize that his getting mark is more important than your son's well being, if he is psychologically affected if he feels so let out, if he feels depressed, if he even thinks of committing suicide, if he thinks of running away from the home and if he completely loses your control. How are you going to get back his love and affection to you? Now negotiating the outcomes; you can go out somewhere we can stay at home, but you can also tell them that may be we will not be able to go to somewhere abroad but we can go to some very beautiful places in India. We can go to Ladakh for example; we can spend some time, so that much money is there with the daddy. And even if daddy is not having the money I have some savings I will use it for this trip let us all go together.

Choosing a solution that works for everybody. Now you have to make the son realize that living at the home with proper understanding is more important than staying outside. Now going out, you have to tell him that it is like impulsive reaction, but you have to make him realize that it is not that easy. And then make them feel genuinely sorry to each other and then whether they say sorry or they hug each other so it is going to end in a kind of Win-Win situation. You can also recollect some of the interesting episodes, anecdotes that might have happened in the childhood stage You can tell the son like you

can tell, *look son how possessive you were with your father: you always used to sleep on his lap or you sleep on this chest and then you never let your daughter even go and sit on his other lap, you are always so possessive and even anybody said anything about your dad you used to feel bad about it. Now how could you say this to your dad?*

And the same thing you can also tell the father like how could you do this you are so affectionate and so happy when he was born and then you were all the time spending your time. Now, recalling these things, making them realize that there was love and then it should not go away because of this trivial situation, we will again bring them back to Win-Win situation.

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Remember before I end this, when you give a Win-Win solution, so there is an intense feeling of mutual respect. At the end of it in both cases they should respect much more than how they respected before and love should grow deeper with every conflict resolved. That should be the motto that you should have. At the end of it the intensity of the relationship should grow, but it should not diminish. If you are able to work it out either as a mediator or if you are part of the conflicts both way it is fine. Now this is about inter-personal relationships.

Now I will come out with more suggestions in the next lecture. I hope you also try to work it out the way I suggested. In case you have better solutions, better suggestions we

can share it in the forum and let's know about it. Thank you for watching this video and then, let me wish you a very conflict free day, for at least, today!

Thank you.