BEING A HUMAN ... that's enough

Module 3 CONFLICTS IN OUR LIVES

The Handbook for the Programme Participants

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"No problem will be solved by sending it to water."

Winston Churchill

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"Anger does not cease through anger at any time. Anger ceases through love."

Buddha

MODULE 3 CONFLICTS IN OUR LIVES

Conflicts are a natural part of everyone's life. They intertwine with our lives and affect them to some extent. It is normal to encounter the conflicts in normal contact with other people. Each of us has different needs, interests and attitudes based on our personality and the situation we are in. It is necessary that during our lives (mostly every day) we across another person or people with the different needs and interests which are in the conflict with ours.

The conflicts have always been, are, and will be. It is good to learn how to live with them in order to be able to use their positive side and to achieve new consistency in the relationships and also in own personal development. It is helpful to know what the conflicts are, how they begin, what are the effective and creative conflict solving strategies and how to learn them.

The following lessons lead us to this knowledge.

LESSON 3.1 What Exactly Is a Conflict?

The word conflict is of Latin origin – conflictus, what means a collision or a hitting an obstacle. There are several definitions of the word conflict, but we are going to use this word for simplicity as the expression of inner personal contradictions and also for the expression of misunderstandings and disagreements in interpersonal relationships.

Common experiences show us that disputes, misunderstandings, conflicts or problems are natural parts of the life. They are diverse and so the solutions of them are differently demanding.

Various conflicts we can divide according to several criteria.

According to the number of persons involved, we can divide the conflicts into[1]:

- – *intrapersonal* – These are the conflicts within a man. Example: At shop I have found out that an assistant forgot to count me one thing for 10 €. On the one hand, I am considering that I'm going to pay it, on the other hand, it attracts me to "save" and go home without paying it.

- – *interpersonal* – These are the conflicts between two or more people. A common example of the interpersonal conflict is the quarrel about who is/was right. Of course, everyone is convinced of his/her truth.

- – *intragroup* – These are the conflicts within one group. The example is the quarrel in the class when deciding about what the common money, earned from collecting or selling newspapers, is spent on. There may arise several opinion groups, some individuals without the opinion, or some ones who have quite different opinions than most, etc.

- – *intergroup* – These are the conflicts between two or more groups. The examples are the conflicts between two classes, ethnic groups or states, and so on.

By source, we divide conflicts into[2]:

– *conflict of relations* – this conflict is provoked by the behaviour of the other person, which is perceived as negative. It begins by not accepting and convicting the behaviour and the differences of the other person. For example, the boy becomes jealous and blames his girl for little noticing him and talking with other boys, what the girl feels as a restriction of freedom.

– *information conflict* – This conflict can arise from e.g. the lack of information, different interpretations, what creates our different opinions about the events that happen. The examples can be many different media cases about which different people hear the information from different (often contradictory) sources and that can make among them the information conflict.

– *conflict of interests* – this type of conflict arises from the incompatible needs of two people in a given situation. For example, there live two girls on a college. One girl wants to listen to music (loudly, otherwise it is not it) and the other one wants to learn but the music interferes with it (she can't concentrate with music).

– *structural conflict* – this conflict begins when enforcing rules through a company structures, but also through informal positions in the group, by division of roles, competencies, rights and duties, and so on. For example, the parent disproportionately punishes the child for inappropriate behaviour and the child is not in a position to call justice.

– *value conflict*– This type of the conflict can be made by our value charts, morals, our faith, things that we like or things which we despise, the life style that we consider right, our ideals, etc. Example, a grandma forces her grandson to eat meat because she can't imagine that someone can be a vegetarian.

In practice, mixed conflicts often occur.

Our conflicts with the other people are *open* or *hidden*. The absence of the open conflict is not a good indicator of the strength and stability of the relationship. In the good relationship, there are the conflicts, they are open and the involved sides know how to solve them.

Conflict Components

Each conflict is composed of two parts[3]:

1. Realistic, objective elements of the conflict – it is the content of the conflict

2. Subjective elements of the conflict – these are mainly the emotions that involved sides survive.

Close relationship strengthens the emotional element of the conflict and so makes it difficult to solve it rationally. Therefore, in the solving of the conflict of the sides which are in the close and long-term relationship, it is necessary to deal also with the emotional and relational aspect of the conflict. On the contrary, in the short, trivial or business relationship, it is the content of the conflict that is more important.

It is important to remember that some situation can be very difficult to master for some person but for the other one it doesn't have to be a problem. The same, in the case of the conflict of some people, the same conflict can be perceived in different ways by the participating people.

To think about

Before you enter the conflict, it is necessary to know what you really solve and what you want to achieve. When you have no idea what is going on, you can still ask (you or the others):

"What's going on? What is bothering you specifically?"

Looking for the right reason of the problem can bring surprisingly fast and efficient solution. But think about the fact that if you ask something, you will probably get the answer whether you will like it or not.

Lesson summary

The conflict expresses inner personal contradictions and also misunderstandings and disagreements in interpersonal relationships.

According to the number of persons involved, we can divide the conflicts into:

– intrapersonal;
– interpersonal;
– intragroup;
– intergroup.

By source, we divide conflicts into:
- − conflict of relations;
- − information conflict;
- − conflict of interests;
- − structural conflict;
- − value conflict.

Our conflicts with the other people are open or hidden.

Each conflict is composed of two parts:

1. Realistic, objective elements of the conflict – it is the content of the conflict

2. Subjective elements of the conflict – these are mainly the emotions that involved sides survive.

It is important to remember that the same common conflict can be perceived differently by each of the participating sides.

LESSON 3.2 Factors Influencing Conflict Solving

Each of us daily survives the situations when we meet different opinions, attitudes, values, when someone obstructs us to achieve what we want, or when we feel that we must fight for ourselves and enforce our opinions.

These situations often cost us a lot of energy, fear, feeling of guilt that we have hurt someone or anger that someone has hurt us.

What behavioural strategy in these situations we choose is fundamentally influenced by three basic factors[4]:

1. Our conflict setting – What we think about the conflicts and our attitude towards them, affect also our behaviour and surviving in the conflict situations. There are many myths and prejudices which we carry with us all our lives and which obstruct us to look at the conflict with "positive eyes". But if we realize in what the conflicts are useful, it can be easier for us to accept them positively and to approach them in a constructive way.

2. The source of the conflict and how the source of the conflict is important for us – It is good if we can name our requirements, needs, interests and goals in arising conflict situation. Some of them are more, some less important for us. This our hierarchy (often subconscious) tells us about our most important needs of which full satisfaction we should strive for. We should not forget the less important ones which we may fill or maybe not. If we name and meet important needs in the conflicts, we can look for the way for filling the other needs, which are not so necessary to make us feel good, more peacefully.

3. Skills of conflicts solving which we can use – During our lives we learn different conflict management styles. These styles we have learnt mostly in childhood and adolescence. Sometimes it seems that we prefer some ways of solving the conflicts somehow automatically, we often don't even realize that we have our personal conflict management style which we prefer. Due to the fact that we have learnt our preferred conflict management style during the life this means that it is result of our learning. So we can try to change, widen this style or to complete it with new approaches.

Our culture tends to perceive the conflict as the competition which result is always dividing of the winner and loser position. Only a small percentage of the conflicts is a real competition with the winner and the loser. Other conflicts can be successfully solved with maximum common profit for both involved sides (winner – winner).

To think about

The usefulness of the conflict is principally in the fact that they force us to action. Simply, we can say that thanks to the conflicts "we don't live on trees".

The conflicts drive us ahead and our dissatisfaction makes us to act. The change is based on the conflicts so they are the basis of the development. The conflicts also work as the tests of adaptability to change. Who cannot solve them, risks his/her own extinction. Therefore, the ability of solving the conflicts is so vital. The conflicts are very important in developing our creativity because they force us to find solutions. Right nowadays the creativity is valued more than ever before. This age is characterized by various technical achievements which can replace human work. But they cannot think creatively. Also thanks to the conflicts we can develop our creative thinking and think about the ways of optimal solution.

The conflicts turn our attention to the relationships, force us not to close into own world, think about the people around us, consider them and perceive stimuli from outside. We realize our interpersonal differences in the conflicts – in needs, opinions, feelings, attitudes and so on. If we respect ourselves and the others in the solving of the conflicts, they can be enrichment for our relationships.

Lesson summary

What behavioural strategy in the conflict situations we choose, is fundamentally influenced by three basic factors:

1. our conflict setting;
2. the source of the conflict and how the source of the conflict is important for us;
3. skills of the conflict solving which we can use.

The usefulness of the conflict is principally in the fact that they force us to action. The change is based on the conflicts so they are the basis of the development. The conflicts are very important in developing our creativity because they force us to find solutions. The conflicts turn our attention to the relationships, force us not to close into own world, think about the people around us, consider them and perceive stimuli from outside.

LESSON 3.3 Basic Types of Behaviour in Conflict Situations

In the past our ancestors had two choices in solving conflicts: fight (aggressiveness) or escape (passivity). Their life depended on their right choice. These reactions are deeply rooted in us and we can see these basic types of behaviour in different stressful or conflict situations at human even nowadays.

Aggressive behaviour

Though today we fight for "bare" survival only in extreme situations, it often happens that we choose aggressive behaviour in the conflict situations, when we unscrupulous enforce ourselves at the expense of the others, we don't want to retreat under any circumstances, we scold the other loudly (so that everyone can hear "who is right"), we threaten, hit or hurt with words where the other's weakness is, etc.

Characteristic signs of aggressive behaviour are: hubris, violence (physical and mental), dislike to listen to the others, shouting, sarcasm, irony, threatening, jumping into speech, bad language and so on.

Aggressive person doesn't respect the other people's rights. If he doesn't feel well or something hasn't worked, he blames the surroundings. He/she is not able to admit his/her mistakes or deficiencies. He/she is proud of the success although his/her share may not be significant.

The aggressive behaviour is often linked with accelerated heart rate, increased sweating, deeper breathing, in extreme case with tremors, or there may be a loss of self-control. The aggressive behaviour reduces inner tension for a short time, but it gradually results to estranging and so it makes another inner tension.

Passive behaviour

Sometimes, on the contrary, we choose passive way when we don't express our opinion, we pretend that everything is fine, alternatively, we go home and there we "cry on a pillow" or we complain "behind the back" about the other and slander him/her. With this behaviour we give up the possibility of an active approach to conflict solving.

Characteristic signs are: a lack of confidence, shyness, silence, not expressing own opinions, self-humiliation, unusual submission to authority, evoking crying for compassion, exaggerated modesty, pretending fatigue, escape from the constructive communication, unwillingness to conclude an agreement and so on.

The passive approach is characterized by adaptability to the requirements of the others. But not every passivity, humility or resignation we must consider as a defeat. If a person decides that he/she gives up his/her own goals or that something is not worth the effort, it doesn't have to mean that he/she acts passively. It always depends on how the person feels about it. Sometimes with a concession the person realizes own wish and is satisfied with the result.

The methods of the behaviour described above – aggressive and passive, have a common basis. Another person is a rival, enemy and in the case of aggressive behaviour there is also a need "to defeat the enemy" as far as possible.

However, there is also a type of the behaviour with which we can enforce our requirements, needs or claims by appropriate means, without harming the others, with a sense of respect and dignity for ourselves and respect for the others. This behaviour is called assertive.

Assertive behaviour

Assertiveness is the authentic behaviour; by which we apply our personal rights so as not to endanger or disturb the other person's rights.

The person who is assertive can communicate openly, defines precisely and clearly what is going on, how he sees the situation, what he thinks about it and how he survives it. He/she approaches positively to the other people and has appropriate self-confidence. He/she expresses with the behaviour that he/she is aware the legitimacy of his/her requests, consider the other side correct and has not another interest, only to solve the conflict situation positively. The person respects the others, can listen to them, weighs what the others say. He/she can admit the mistake, is able to change own opinion if it is based on arguments. He has no problem to ask for a favour or to give it. He does not deceive himself if he fails in something, does not blame the others for his failure, nor persuade himself that it was some kind of the success.

The assertive behaviour comes out of respect for yourself and of respect to the others and allows to join an equal relation of giving and receiving.

To think about

The question is not, to participate in the conflict or not. You cannot hide from the conflicts either at home nor at school or at friends. It usually doesn't matter whether you win or lose.

It is more important how you play. Because solving the conflict is able also with the respect to yourself and the others. Effective conflict solving is an art which we can improve in. The conflict is not bad. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to settle things.

Lesson summary

Our ancestors solved the conflicts in the past in two ways: the fight or the escape.

These reactions are deeply rooted in us and we can see these basic types of behaviour in different stressful or conflict situations in human even nowadays as the form of *aggressive* or *passive* behaviour.

There is also a type of the behaviour with which we can enforce our requirements, needs or claims by appropriate means, without harming the others, with a sense of respect and dignity for ourselves and respect for the others. This behaviour is called assertive.

Effective conflict solving is an art which we can improve in.

LESSON 3.4 Methods of Conflict Solving

We can solve the conflicts in different ways. If we use our power and influence to get as much as possible for ourselves (regardless of the other side, and often at the expense of the other), we talk about *authoritative methods of conflict solving*.

This group also includes those situations where a third side is involved in the solving of the dispute. This side decides authoritatively either by law or its own consideration in favour of that side which is convinced that it is in law. The solutions of these conflicts are often unacceptable for the one of the sides (and sometimes for the both).

This fact has motivated some experts to look for the new methods of the conflict solving, with which the involved sides would be more satisfied. These experts have described so called *alternative methods of conflict solving*, which lead the involved sides to mutual tolerance and respect. They create for the participants the greatest possible space to decide freely about what and in what way they will agree. The possibility of active participation on the conflict solving then increases the probability of the satisfaction with the outcome, also in the cases when the optimal solution for all involved sides cannot be found.

Authoritative methods of conflict solving

The basic authoritative methods of the conflict solving include[5]:

Decision by the authority – The authority decides by own judgment without or after a hearing of interested sides. For example: the parent decides how to solve the dispute between the children.

Positional negotiation – The participants in the conflict communicate directly, but the stronger one enforces its decision according to the force ratio. The involved side measure their strength but do not address the nature of the conflict. The stronger side decides.

Judicial decision – The participants in the conflict communicate with a court directly or through lawyers. The court is represented by a judge or a senate who makes a decision under the law.

Arbitration (arbitration proceeding) – An arbitrator makes a decision under the law (rules) after the hearing of the involved sides.

Alternative methods of conflict solving

The basic alternative methods of the conflict solving include[6]:

Interested-based negotiation – The sides communicate together directly, cooperate to solve the problem which they perceive as common and they reach agreement together.

Facilitation– The facilitator, as the third, unbiased side, helps to conduct a fair and balanced communication process between the participating sides. The participants in the conflict communicate directly with a help of the third person who manages and makes the discussion more transparent. The agreement is reached together by the participants.

Reconciliation – Reconciliation of the sides can happen by the representatives of the parties to the conflict in the Conciliation Council. The representatives of the parties have an understanding for their sides and are not directly involved in the conflict. The agreement is reached together by the participants.

Mediation – The mediator is the intermediary who communicate in the conflict solving especially with the one side then with the other, maintains the correct communication and leads the negotiating process of the involved sides. The agreement is reached together by the participants.

Conflict versus rules

People often behave like the conflict was always "the fight" between the opposite points of view or incompatible needs, interests, values. At time when there is no conflict, certain rules are kept. However, during "the fight", there are a few rules and some people really can do whatever to achieve what they want. But if there is e.g. violence in the conflict solving, it is a violation of human rights. These rights belong to all people indiscriminately. Therefore, we all should respect them whether we are in the conflict or not.

To think about
Our world is full of contradictions. One wise woman left us this message:
"People are irrational, illogical and selfish, but still love them.
If you do well, people will blame you for selfish, lateral intentions, but still do well.

If you are successful, you will get false friends and real enemies. But still be successful.
The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow, but still do the good.
Honesty and sincerity make you vulnerable. But still be honest and sincere.
What you have been building for years, it may break down in one night. But still build.
People really need your help, but they may attack you if you help them.
But still help.
Give the world the best you have and it will hit you in the face.
But still give the world the best you have."

Mother Teresa

Lesson summary

If we use our power and influence to get as much as possible for ourselves in the conflict solving (regardless of the other side, and often at the expense of the other), we talk about the *authoritative methods of conflict solving*. The basic authoritative methods of the conflict solving include:

• *Decision by the authority*   • *Judicial decision*

• *Positional negotiation*   • *Arbitration (arbitration proceeding)*

On the contrary, the methods of conflict solving which lead the involved sides to mutual tolerance and respect, and which create for the participants the greatest possible space to decide freely about what and in what way they will agree, we call the *alternative methods of the conflict solving*. The basic alternative methods of the conflict solving include:

• *Interested-based negotiation*   • *Reconciliation*

• *Facilitation*   • *Mediation*

Let us avoid the human rights violations in the conflict situations. These rights belong to all people indiscriminately and we all should respect them whether we are in the conflict or not.

# LESSON 3.5 What Happens if Conflict Is Not Being Solved

There are more phases in the conflict process, from the first signs to the fatigue and depression from the long-term psychological stress. Depending on what attitude people take to the conflict solving, this may or may not go through all phases.

To illustrate all phases of the conflict development, we will deal with the conflict which is not only being solved but the involved parties even aggravate it with their behaviour and actions. The process of this conflict can be divided into the six phases[7]:

Phase 1 – Conflict signs   *Phase 3 – Polarization   Phase 5 – Destruction*
Phase 2 – Opening conflict   Phase 4 – Isolation   Phase 6 – Fatigue, depression

Look at the conflict development curve. Y-axis shows the rising negative emotions during the conflict and X-axis shows time sequence of individual phases of the conflict.
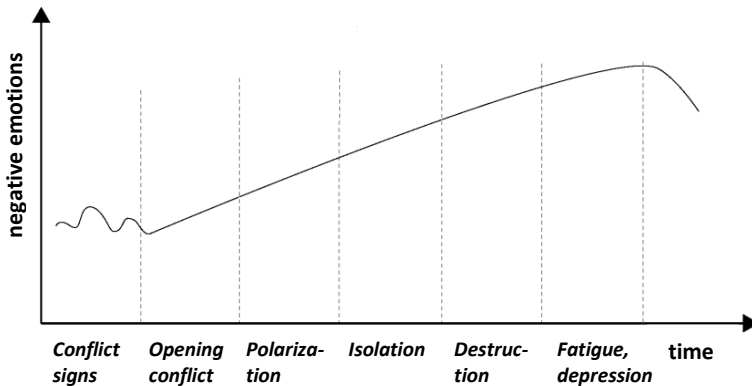
Picture – the conflict development curve[8]

Phase 1 – Conflict signs

This is the initial phase of the conflict when the first negative emotions, as stress, anger, doubt, etc., appear. The one or both involved parties think about the arising situation, take all possible ideas of what will happen next. At some person this phase can be manifested physically, e.g. with stomach ache, tight throat, accelerated heart rate, increased pressure, changing eating habits and so on. These signals notify us that "something is happening", we are getting into the conflict.

Example: Two friends work at a common task, a long-term school project. We call one of them Martin and the other Filip. Martin always fulfils his tasks responsibly, but Filip often does not manage to do the agreed tasks due to problems in a family. But Martin helps Filip with the missed tasks because he is his friend. After some time, however, Martin is finding out that Filip is misusing it and that he prefers his personal interests over the common commitments. He starts to feel uncomfortable. He likes Filip, but at the same time, he is angry for abusing of his help and helpfulness.

Phase 2 – Opening conflict

This phase occurs when one of the involved sides shows its dissatisfaction with the situation which it perceives as the conflict. The side says loudly its opinion, what he/she feels, thinks about the situation, what makes him/her angry, hinders him/her, what would be good to change and so on. The negative emotions are rising because the person goes into the open conflict, what is often uncomfortable.

Example: Martin has found out that Filip played football with friends yesterday evening and has not made the agreed task for the next day. In that moment he won't last and tell Filip, what he thought about his irresponsible attitude.
Martin: "Where is your task?"
Filip: "I haven't managed it. Could you help me with it?"
Martin: "No, I couldn't. If you have time for playing football, while I'm doing at the project, so do not count with my help! Your irresponsibility gets me already nervous!"
Filip: "I am responsible! If I didn't help, we wouldn't be so good with it! It is my matter of spending my free time!"
He is turning sharply and unwittingly nudging Martin with his elbow.
Martin: "The fact, that we are so good with the project, is certainly not because of your diligence, and do not nudge to me, can't you be careful?"

Phase 3 – Polarization

In this phase the involved persons start to defend their positions because they think that they are right. In the case, that all insist on their positions and do not want to retreat, they start to aggravate the dispute by persuading about "own truth", threatening, blaming, swearing, ridiculing, humiliation and so on. The original cause of the dispute comes from the factual argumentation to the emotional lunges which have only little in common with the original problem So the anger, aggression and other negative emotions grade.

Example: Filip: "Don't be sensitive! I just stroke you! And stop lying and insulting me!"
Martin: "What?! I am lying? If someone tells you the truth, does it hurt you? Do you want to tell me that you weren't playing football?"
Filip: "At all, do not care about me whether I'm playing football or not! You can't even hit the ball! I don't even know a bigger bumpkin!"
Martin: "So you don't know yet more. And believe that I'd rather be a bumpkin than a fool who cannot keep his word!"

Phase 4 – Isolation

This phase is characterized by the fact that the participants of the conflict do not talk together. However, the conflict goes on. The participants often realize absurdity of this situation and also their helplessness in dispute solving. So they prefer "the punishing the other" by isolating him/her (not answering the phone, mails, ignoring at social networks, quiet household etc.). Sometimes the reason for the isolation is also the feeling less mental stress than in the open conflict. This behavioural style we can see more often at women than men. For someone this phase lasts longer, some may jump directly to the destruction phase.

Example: Martin says there is no point in arguing with Filip and he stops talking to him. He is angry with him, he feels uncomfortable because Filip used him and waits for the next opportunity to return it to him. At the same time, he is afraid of losing the friend. Filip do the same, he is angry too, he thinks that Martin is crazy, feisty and you can't normally talk to him. He is also afraid of losing the friend, who won't help him with his tasks, whisper on the test or lend a CD, what he has promised. But it doesn't matter, he won't talk to this "fool".

Phase 5 – Destruction

This phase is characterized with the destructive behaviour of the conflict participants. It can be physical harm (one hits the other), psychological harm (one humiliates the other or terrifies e.g. with threatening mail), or material damage (one damages, messes up or steals the other's property).

Example: In our example, this phase manifests when Martin meets Filip and they start fighting on a small impulse. Filip is disclosing Martin's secret before the class; they destroy each other's work. This behaviour is accompanied with swearing and anger, with the rest breaks. New explosions of aggression and escalating of the conflict during next day or days.

Phase 6 – Fatigue, depression

If the destructive phase takes longer, the participants of the conflict get exhausted after some time because of constant struggle and they become tired and depressed from the absurdity of the situation. This often reflects on their mental and physical health. The signs of this phase use to be the increased morbidity of the participants, avoiding the places where they could meet, they can't keep going, but don't know how to solve nor quit the conflict. Despite of the fatigue and the senselessness of the situation, the small impulse is enough to get both sides again to the destructive phase and to continue the fighting between them.

Example: Filip starts to avoid the lessons where he has made the common project with Martin, he has worsened school marks, has lost the learning motivation and he has stopped to like the school. Martin has remorse, is sad because he has lost the friend and mate in school projects, he falls ill and also worsens at school marks.

How to prevent the escalation of the conflict?

There are the methods of this situation solving for each phase of the conflict[9].

Phase 1: Conflict signs – In the first phase it is necessary to realize what is happening – what hinders me in the behaviour of another person, what I want to achieve, what are my needs and what feelings the situation evokes in me. Then it is necessary to open the conflict.

Phase 2: Opening conflict – In this phase we need to name the conflict in a decent form and through the feedback to express our feelings, interests, to name the behaviour with which the other side hurts me. Here it is the space for negotiating and submitting the solving situation proposals, which are acceptable for all sides. You need to be comprehensible, reliable, to show understanding to the other side, e.g. with active listening.

Phase 3: Polarization –It is necessary to not respond aggressively for remorse, accusation, criticism and to try to reformulate them into a matter of fact. To name the interests of the involved sides and to look for the solutions to which they will agree. After the mutual agreement, we can ask for help a neutral side (some facilitator, mediator, reputable authority), who can help with solving that problem.

Phase 4: Isolation – It is beneficial to ask someone who is respected by the all involved and seen as the independent authority (a mediator, a facilitator, a judge). Independent person helps to find so ways of the communication and solutions that will end or solve the conflict.

Phase 5: Destruction – It is perfect if an independent person entries into the conflict. This person must be the sufficient authority for all sides and must have such a power to stop the destructive behaviour. After the preventing the further negative behavioural manifestation, we need to start negotiating agreement acceptable for the both sides.

Phase 6: Fatigue, depression – In this phase it is important to give to the conflict participants the support (physical, mental, material) and to help them to restore the lost balance, or with their active participation to try for reconciliation and creation of conditions which prevent the return into the destructive phase of the conflict.

In each of these phases it is good to use knowledge of communication from the previous module.

To think about

Once, a burglar, named Angulimal, wanted to kill Buddha.
"At least, please, fulfil my last wish before the death," said Buddha.
"Cut off that tree branch."
One waving of the sword and the branch was gone. "What now?"
"Put it back", said Buddha.
The burglar started to laugh. "You must be crazy, if you think that it is possible."
"No. You are crazy, you who consider yourselves powerful because you can hurt and destroy. This even the child can. Those, who are really powerful, can create and heal."[10]

Lesson summary

There are more phases in the conflict process, from the first signs to the fatigue and depression from the long-term psychological stress, while not every conflict has to go through the all phases.

There are these phases:

Phase 1 – Conflict signs   *Phase 4 – Isolation*

Phase 2 – Opening conflict   *Phase 5 – Destruction*

Phase 3 – Polarization   *Phase 6 – Fatigue, depression*

There are the methods of this situation solving for each phase of the conflict.

In each of these phases is good to use knowledge of respectful communication.

LESSON 3.6 Negotiation

The ability to negotiate is one of the key skills in solving interpersonal conflicts. By the negotiation we understand the situation when two or more sides clarify their attitudes and interests in the common discussion, and they try to enforce them by the mutual agreement.

We can negotiate in many ways which are different in the basic approaches and in the fact whether we perceive the other side as:

- a rival that threaten us – *so called, **positional negotiation***,
- partner, with whom we are solving the problem – *so called, **interested-based negotiation***.[11]

Principles of Positional Negotiator[12]

1. Never say more than it is necessary – The positional negotiator conceal information believing that revealing them will show weaknesses and the other may defeat him/her.

2. The first concession must be made by the other side – The positional negotiator is convinced that if he makes the first concession, the other one won't do it and so he will lose the advantage. The rivalling attitude "who from whom" creates a barrier for offers from the opposite side.

3. Try to weaken the position of the other side – The positional negotiator searches for weaknesses to attack them, he/she tries to weaken, to undermine self-confidence, to intimidate, to provoke, to succeed.

4. Do not allow the other side to win – The positional negotiator is convinced that if the other side reaches what they wanted, then he/she has lost. So he/she tries to get as much as possible from the other side and to defeat it.

5. Do not trust the other side – The positional negotiator is convinced that the opposite side steps are camouflage manoeuvre for catching them into a trap and to defeat them. He/she is convinced that he can't trust the other side.

6. Hide your needs and interests – The positional negotiator is convinced that he/she have to use tricks, to fog the truth, to step traps, to surprise, to distract from the nature of the conflict. He/she is convinced that if he says the truth, the opposite side will certainly abuse it against them.

7. Exaggerate your demands – The positional negotiator is convinced that he/she must start with high demands in order he would be able to retreat without real loss.

8. At the end, the positional negotiator tries to do everything to prevent the other party from doing what he wants to do them.

Principles of Interested-based Negotiation[13]

1. To separate people from a problem – We try to be "soft" on the people but "hard" on the problem – in the negotiating we are correct and partners and we treat the problem solving as a challenge that we can overcome. We do not fight with the opposite side, but we use its cooperation to find the solution of the situation which we are together in.

2. To understand what the other side wants and feels – If we understand the opposite side, we will be able to offer them what they need and we will also understand their interests.

3. To name our interests – We try to understand and name the interests that are behind our opinions and also behind the opinions of the other side.

4. To look at another person as a partner – We perceive another person as a person willing to make a deal, we trust him/her and show it not only with words but also by actions.

5. To suggest such solutions with which not only our interests but also the other side's interests could be satisfied – We are interested not only in what we want to achieve but also in what the opposite side wants.

6. To agree on things that are acceptable to us – If we find in the proposals something what is acceptable for us, we will agree to accept. If we find something what is not acceptable, we find out why it is and look for a more acceptable solution.

7. If it is necessary, we address a neutral side – If we cannot decide some things, we will agree on an independent person who will help us, or we will agree a criterion that will decide objectively instead of us.

Our chosen approach (whether rivalling or cooperative) then reflects in our behaviour and the way we communicate with the other. The other people perceive this behaviour and return it according to their settings, the most often they react similarly as we do. Our behaviour can decide whether we will start a cycle of competing steps, which will lead to escalating of the conflict, or on the contrary, a cycle of cooperative steps leading to the cooperation and the agreement. Our willingness to take the responsibility for the constructive solution of the conflict, helps to its positive solving.

Preparing for negotiation[14]

1. Define your negotiation space – For the negotiation it is important to define own space (separately for each thing we want to negotiate), where we can move – own maximum and minimum – borders, where we are still willing to agree and ones, where we don't want to get. In this agreement space we can offer helpful steps.

2. Name and give out your aims, interests and needs – Before the negotiation it is necessary to clarify what we want to achieve and what interests we need to fulfil to be satisfied. Then we give them out gradually during the negotiation and so we make the needed steps to the cooperation with the other side.

3. Be interested in the aims, interests and needs of the other side and name them – Before and during the negotiating we have the space for finding out and naming the aims, interests and needs of the opposite side. This fact is the key to the successful conflict solving. Then you need to prioritize (both you and the other) and to order the importance of each interest.

4. Think about and propose possible solutions – Offering suggestions is essential for making the common agreement. There is needed the discussion about which of the solutions satisfy the individual interests of the participants and searching for those parts of the solutions that are acceptable for both parties. We will agree on the things which are acceptable for us and we are gradually adding new proposals to the adopted proposals till the whole agreement is made up of various proposals that are acceptable to both parties.

5. Be friendly to the other side – Our interesting in the other side we show not only with words but also by trying to accommodate with the solutions that meet their interests, too. Striving for the mutual acceptance is a good sign of the constructive conflict solving.

To think about

The farmer, whose grain has always won the first prize at the international exhibition, shared his best sowing with farmers farming around his field every year. When someone asked him why, he answered:

"It is also my own interest. The wind takes pollen and takes it from the field to the field. If my neighbours grew inferior grain, crossing would reduce the quality of my own grain. So I care to they have the best grain in the field, too." Everything what we give to the others, we give also to ourselves. It is impossible to help the others without helping ourselves, or to harm the others without harming ourselves, too.[15]

Lesson summary

By the negotiation we understand the situation when two or more sides clarify their attitudes and interests in the common discussion, and they try to enforce them in the final agreement.

We distinguish two basic approaches in the negotiating:

- *positional negotiation* (we perceive the other as the rival which threatens us);
- *interested-based negotiation* (we perceive the other as a partner with whom we solve the problem).

Our chosen approach (whether rivalling or cooperative) can decide whether we will start a cycle of competing steps, which will lead to the escalating of the conflict, or on the contrary, a cycle of cooperative steps leading to the cooperation and the agreement.

Principles of interested-based negotiation:

1. To separate people from a problem.
2. To understand what the other side wants and feels.
3. To name our interests.
4. To look at another person as a partner.
5. To suggest such solutions with which not only our interests but also the other side's interests could be satisfied.
6. To agree on things that are acceptable to us.
7. If it is necessary, we address a neutral side

MODULE 3 SUMMARY

The conflicts are the natural parts of our lives. We encounter them in everyday contact with people almost daily. On the one hand, conflicts have their positives – the mutual confrontations develop our personality, creativity, ability to defend and to communicate, on the other hand, the conflicts, which are not solved constructively, are destructive in nature.

We can develop the skills needed for the constructive conflict solving through the personal experience, but also through the targeted training for optimal responses and approach, practicing respectful and assertive communication and, of course, through the applying acquired skills in practice.

It is good to protect your own rights and interests, however, for building satisfactory relationships it is good to look at the situation also through the eyes of the other side. It is important to listen to what the other says and to respect the opinions and needs of the others. There is a rarely the situation where the conflict cannot be resolved so that both sides are satisfied.

The conflicts have always been, are and will be. We believe that also thanks to the previous lessons we will be able to use their positive side and to reach new consistency in interpersonal relationships and in own personal development.

NOTES

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