

ELSE HAMMERICH

**MEETING
CONFLICTS MINDFULLY**

**Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution - TCCR
Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution – DCCR**

CONTENTS

PREFACE, 1

H.H. THE DALAI LAMA: ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION, 2

BASIC CONFLICT UNDERSTANDING

- Are conflicts always harmful? ,5
- Definitions, 5
- Assumptions on human nature, 6

ANALYSING CONFLICTS

- Zones of conflict, 8
- Dimensions, 9
- Uphill: conflict escalation, 11
- Mapping conflicts, 14
- Needs, 14
- A story of two brothers, 17

MEETING CONFLICTS

- Three ways of responding, 19
- Issue and relation, 20
- The story of two brothers, 20

THE LANGUAGE OF CONFLICT SOLVING

- Opening & blocking communication, 22
- The art of dialogue, 24
- Limits of dialogue, 25
- Active listening, 26
- The interview, 26
- Nonviolent communication, 27
- A story of two brothers, 27

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

- Downhill, a sketch, 29
- What is it to solve a conflict? 30
- The steps of basic conflict resolution, 30
- Interests and needs, 32
- A story of two brothers, 33
- Supervision & mindful conversation, 34
- Mediation in zone 2, 37
- The steps of mediation, 40
- Working with a group conflict, 45

CO-OPERATION

- The iceberg principle, 46
- Teambuilding, 46
- Feedback, 48
- Better meetings, 48

TEACHING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- A didactic sketch, 50
- Mindful planning of workshops - a didactic guide, 51
- The process, Zone 3, 51
- The goals, Zone 2, 55
- The purpose, Zone 1, 56

PREFACE

This publication is dedicated to Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution, TCCR, a new organisation with the purpose of promoting various approaches and tools of nonviolent conflict management and democratic processes with the view to strengthen the community, the unity and the nonviolent struggle.

We here present a variety of those approaches and tools. They are some of the contents we worked with in the Trainers' Training, which the TCCR members undertook from November 2000 till May 2001. It is a partnership project between the CTA, Home Department and Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution, DCCR⁺, and sponsored by DANIDA, the Foreign Ministry of Denmark.

One of the goals of the project was to integrate our approach to conflict resolution with Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan culture. This integration started at the audience 29.11.2000 with H.H. the Dalai Lama, who gave the group a precise lecture on conflict transformation. It continued through many inspiring dialogues between the trainees and us. And it grew when we enjoyed the teachings of some excellent Buddhist scholars who kindly accepted being guest teachers: Geshe Sonam Rinpoche, Geshe K. Damdul and Lakha Rinpoche.

As the training was very intensive, we did however not have much time to formulate

this East-West integration in written form. This is a task that lies ahead.

We hope and think that the TCCR team will amend and improve this publication in the years to come. It is all theirs, and they can use it as a stepping stone to write their own manual. Or they can use it as inspiration, lay it aside and start all over. The choice is theirs and they are the group that can develop the integration.

This publication builds on an international manual of DCCR, "The art of Conflict Resolution", which as well as this paper is written by Else Hammerich. Bjarne Vestergaard wrote the chapters on basic human needs, feedback, supervision and mindful conversation, and we are both are responsible for the editing. The TCCR team has contributed with a postscript.

We sincerely wish that this work would benefit the TCCR, the Tibetan community and the nonviolent struggle of the Tibetan people.

Dharamsala, April 2001,

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H.H. THE DALAI LAMA

'ALL THESE PROBLEMS ARE CAUSED BY IGNORANCE'

On November the 29th 2000 the group of trainees, who later formed the TCCR, had the privilege of being received in audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This was an empowering event. The Dalai Lama received the group with great warmth and gave a precise teaching on the essentials of conflict resolution, from a Buddhist angle. Furthermore he stressed his hopes and expectations to the TCCR.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Ask me a question and if some wisdom comes through my brain, then I will share it to you.

Question: What is the cause of conflict and what are the ways to resolve it according to Buddhist philosophy?

Answer: According to the Buddhist philosophy the main source of conflict is hatred and attachment, and the root cause of these conflicting emotions is ignorance. It is obvious - let us not speak in terms of Dharma but generally - that most conflicting crises arise due to feelings of repulsion. There is no concrete object we can pinpoint as a source of undesirable feeling. There are so many causes and conditions, which produce these conflicting crises, including your behaviour and actions. For instance, when any person becomes your enemy or undesirable object, one condition refers back to your way of looking and relating with the person. If you relate to this person with doubt, suspicion and ill feelings, slowly and gradually the other person also dislikes you. At the end both start hurting each other, and then

they become enemies.

There are in fact so many causes and conditions for enmity. Within these many causes and conditions, your way of conducting yourself is also included. But our usual way of thinking is "I have done my best to this person but he behaved so badly with me, so this person is so bad. I have behaved sincerely with pure motivation, but he gave me lots of trouble". And immediately a thought of revenge arises in your mind. This is not dharma talk. Just examine, how it happens. If we understand the reasons, causes and conditions, time factors and so-forth, then we realise that there is no concrete object to pinpoint as the main cause. If you think in these general processes and do a research, you cannot pinpoint a concrete object, and consequently you can reduce your ill feelings.

For instance, how many wars were fought in the earlier part of the 20th century? When the wars were fought, it was through pointing out one concrete object as undesirable, without seeing how many inter-connections there are. When using force and weapons to destroy the opponents, it was presumed that there was only one concrete object. However, the reality is completely different.

From the perspective of dharma, we say that the root causes are hatred and attachment, and strong separation of "we" and "others". Building this strong notion of "self" and "others" is based on ignorance, or not knowing reality. All these problems are caused by ignorance of the concrete grasping of the self, which is diametrically opposed to the comprehension of selflessness. This is a very profound discussion of the Buddhist philosophy.

Even though not talking from the profound level of Buddhist philosophy, we can say that not to realise reality will result in a strong

polarisation of “others” and “we”. I am always saying that now that the world is one, there is no need to make a strong barrier of “others” and “we”.

For instance usually we are saying “these Indians”, and in reality our survival is dependent on Indians. Maybe an Indian is causing us problems; and it may for instance be due to a Tibetans’ show-off and stylishness, wearing brand new watches, riding huge motor cycles – that definitely can make Indians feel uncomfortable. If we look down upon them, then of course it is a complete mistake to blame them for creating problems for us. If we think in a wider perspective, through knowing the real causes and conditions, then when something goes wrong, we could instead think that there is nothing to blame them. In actual sense, it is our mistake. Indians are really kind, and our survival is depending on them. If we think in this way, there are no conflicts at all. Therefore, it is extremely important to know the reality and view the problem in a wider perspective.

Secondly, a main cause of conflict is the lack of justice and honesty. In such cases one must take counter measures. There is a technique to deal with such problems. If the conflict arises due to different interest and approaches, in that case both parties are right from their side. For these problems, we have to be open in our discussion and dialogue, with honesty, frankness and sincerity. Not feel afraid of each other, nor reproach the other for talking differently or thinking differently from you. One should say honestly, that you want these benefits and I want these. And now for both to receive these, we could do in this way. There is nothing to hide for each other, and there is no need to deceive each other. Be open from the heart - in this way we can solve the problems. If we do not go in the right direction, if we are dishonest, then problems definitely arise, and of course it is our mistake since we are

telling lies. If the problem arises due to telling lies then one must go back to the track of honesty. There is no other solution than this. We must solve the problem by making the matter clear through sincere motivation, with honesty and justice. Taking care of the interest and benefits of others and respecting them. I think that there are ways to act like this.

Question: What is your expectation of our forming a Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution?

Answer: As long as there is human society, there will always be conflict. As I always say that if we do not want conflict at all, we have to make the entire humanity stupid or dull, and - then there will be no problem at all. We can take out the human brain, which thinks so much, then there is no conflict at all. This is impossible, even if we try, and it is really stupid idea, since human intelligence is so precious. As long as there is human intellect, definitely there will be different ideas, viewpoints, and different outlooks. This is also a kind of basis for human conflict. As long as human beings have conscience, and intellect to think about the future, definitely there will be conflicts. Conflicts are made by human beings and methods to solve them must be created through human intelligence. It is wise to dispel the conflict through dialogue, not through weapons and nuclear power. One has to discuss clearly to solve human conflicts. Therefore, this new NGO program is extremely important.

As I have mentioned earlier, the inter-related methods to resolve the conflict is, from the Buddhist perspective, dependent arising. This interdependent idea shows the reality very clearly. Therefore, if we implement the idea of inter-dependency, this will help us to realise the real causes and conditions of the problems. It is important to implement the idea through honesty and justice. The basis of honesty and justice is love and compassion. If one has love and compassion in one’s heart

one will definitely think about others' purpose, and accept the others as they are. One will think that the other being is also a part of my being, and in that way we can remain truthful and open.

Naturally suspicion and doubts arise if we build thick barriers or walls between "them" and "us". Particularly if one holds strong hatred, this ill feeling towards others automatically will bring suspicion and doubt. In such circumstances, openness is impossible. Therefore, this inter-dependent view of Buddhism helps us to think more broadly and widely. If we set up good new NGO and if it gets more connected with many foreign countries, definitely it is possible that we can contribute new ideas to them. As a result we can also find another path to enter the UN. This will give some extra work and pressure to the Chinese embassy.

Question: After four months of training a new NGO will be formed. Will the Tibetan government support it? If yes, in what ways?

Answer: Yes, money! So, you need money. Isn't it? Not just a blessing but a concrete blessing. Of course, the Tibetan exile government will give full support. For the initial expenses, we can not give millions but the exile government could give a couple hundred thousand, but I don't mean in Dollars. OK. It is very important and you should form this NGO.

Question: Your Holiness, nonviolence is the best way to solve our conflict between Tibet and China, however sometimes, I feel it is taking a long time. Therefore, we would love to hear from your Holiness if there is any other ways to achieve our aim. Please advice?

Answer: I have adopted this idea or method of the middle way approach since 1973, for 27 years despite the lack of response from the Chinese government on a possible dialogue about Tibet. I still believe that the middle way approach is the best and most practical

way and I think there is no reason to change that position. If you have something to say then that it is welcome, any criticism is welcome. Not just mere criticism of my approach but you must show some alternative solution; just mere criticism without any alternative solution is of no much use.

Question: We are given this training on the conflict resolution. Your Holiness, what is the best way to solve the conflict according to your opinion?

Answer: In addition to what I have said, the most crucial factor is determination. Our middle way approach has no progress, no response from the Chinese government's side and also sometimes among our Tibetans, there is no response, but despite that, we are fully committed to the approach and keeping our determination. Any sort of human effort needs determination. To overcome the obstacles for the determination, we need tolerance and patience. Tolerance should not be considered as a sign of weakness. Since we have the truth, eventually it will bring results, if not in our generation then in next generation – the beauty of truth always remains. Force, aggression, power, guns - these are not beautiful and do not last long. Truth and honesty always inspire, and practice of tolerance and determination will prevail. These are important, for instance we have a saying: "link the rift nine times" - that is very good in practice. That is all.

Thank you.

BASIC CONFLICT UNDERSTANDING

ARE CONFLICTS ALWAYS HARMFUL?

Most of us feel uncomfortable when we hear the word *conflicts*. We would rather avoid them than deal with them. And no wonder - our experiences with them are often sinister. In our personal lives we see conflicts lead to fear, lost friendships, painful gossip, sleepless nights, broken hopes, drained energy. And at world level we see them causing misery and wars for untold millions and generations.

All this gives us solid reasons for regarding conflicts as dangerous and wishing to get rid of them. But they could be understood differently, if we see them in a more nondualistic way.

The image shows two large, bold Chinese characters stacked vertically. The top character is '危' (wēi) and the bottom character is '機' (jī). Together they form the word '危機' (wēijī), which translates to 'crisis' or 'danger'. The characters are written in a traditional, calligraphic style with thick black strokes.

This Chinese character means crisis, and it consists of two parts, one signifying danger and the other signifying possibility. If we reflect on the crises we have met, we can see that it is true: They are frightening, -but they

may lead to new openings in life. The same goes for conflicts. They may bring about enmity, emotional crippling and stagnation. They may as well lead to a deeper sense of community among people, to development and to more honesty. It all depends on how they are treated and lived through. So in our understanding conflicts are neither good nor bad. They are life's challenges to us. They are part of life and cannot be avoided. They go hand-in-hand with any kind of change.

Living through conflicts can make us wiser *or* more limited. They can make our lives richer *or* poorer. What counts is how mindfully we respond to them. In Mahatma Gandhi's thinking conflicts should neither be suppressed nor explode in violence - they should be transformed into energy.

As long as human beings have conscience and intellect to think about the future, definitely there will be conflicts. Conflicts are made by human beings and methods to solve them must be created through human intelligence. It is wise to solve the conflict through dialogue, not through weapons.

H.H. the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala 29.11.2001

If we see discords in this way, and we think of them as a common human condition, they may be less scaring. Especially when we know that we *can* learn to manage them more wisely. The tools exist and we can make use of them, if we choose so.

As the peace researcher Jan Øberg puts it: we do not need to be conflict illiterates.

DEFINITIONS

There are books full of definitions of conflicts. The Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution uses a broad definition:

Conflicts are disagreements that lead to tensions within and between people.

By *disagreement* we mean something very simple: we have different opinions about an issue, about what to do. This does not necessarily mean that we bear ill feelings towards each other, - we are simply not on terms regarding an issue. It is not yet a conflict between us.

It is only when unpleasant *tensions* arise within a person or between people that we would call it a conflict. Tensions are not always unpleasant; they can be quite exiting, just like in the word *intense*. It is the unpleasant tensions that make the conflict – together with the disagreement about some issue.

The *tensions* have to do with the relation between the people involved, and the *disagreement* refers to the issue of the dispute. A conflict always consists of these two, *issue and relation*. If we wish to treat the conflict mindfully, we will have to address both. We try to find a workable solution to the problem, and we try to improve the human relation. If we forget to open the relation, the tensions will remain. And if we fail to settle the issue, the solution will have a short life.

The group that are now running the TCCR have come up with another definition:

Conflicts are disagreements, disputes and dissatisfactions, which are due to ignorance and lead to tensions within and between people.

This definition includes the notion of ignorance, which is rooted in Buddhist philosophy, and which is stressed by the Dalai Lama in the above article: *‘from the perspective of dharma, we say that the root causes of conflict are hatred and attachment, and a strong separation of “we” and “others”’. Building this strong notion of “self” and “others” is based on ignorance, or not knowing reality. All these problems are caused by ignorance of the concrete grasping of the self, which is diametrically opposed to*

the comprehension of selflessness. This is a very profound discussion of the Buddhist philosophy.’

The interdependence of “self” and “others” is expressed like this by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh:

*I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones
my legs are thin as bamboo sticks
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly
weapons to Uganda. **

ASSUMPTIONS ON HUMAN NATURE

Behind our view of conflict obviously lies a view of humane nature: deep down, human beings wish to live in community. We do not ignore the endless sufferings that humans inflict on each other, nor the cruelties we commit to each other – worse than what any other animal would be able to commit. But we strongly believe that harming each other is not what human beings fundamentally wish for and thrive by.

If this was the case there was no meaning whatsoever in promoting nonviolent conflict resolution, of which the core is, that it is totally voluntary.

There is a core of goodness in human beings that may be hidden or buried and unexpectedly emerges”.

Nelson Mandela in his autobiography.

Trust is, according to the Danish Christian philosopher K.E. Løgstrup, a *spontaneous manifestation of life*, a pre-cultural human

* from his poem “Please call me by my true names” in “Being Peace”, Berkeley 1987

condition, without which no community could have arisen. If spontaneously we met each other with mistrust we simply could not live, our life would wither away and we would be stunted, he says.

H.H. the Dalai Lama expresses a similar conviction when he says: *“my philosophical starting-point is that basic human nature is to be gentle”*. He calls this fundamental kindness “the basic human feeling”.

When I speak of basic human feeling, I refer to the capacity we all have to empathise with one each other, which in Tibetan we call ‘shen dug ngal wa la mi sö pa’. Translated literally it means “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering”.

H.H. The Dalai Lama in ‘Ancient wisdom, modern world’, London 1999.

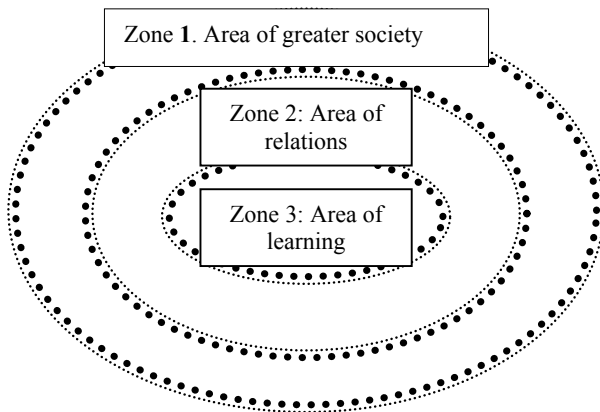
When we think of our close relations and our everyday surroundings, it is not difficult to spot the fundamental gentleness of human nature. But when we look into the state of the world, seeing the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the arms race and the destruction of nature, the gentleness becomes less obvious.

We know that man created it all. But at the same time, it seems that big entities like super powers and multinational giants undertake an independent existence and become self-moving mechanisms, which seem almost inhuman. And still. Man created and governs it all. Nobody else has the responsibility. This is a paradox that practitioners of conflict resolution have to relate seriously to, in order not to become naive and unrealistic.

ANALYSING CONFLICTS

ZONES OF CONFLICT

In order to find out, where and how we can work with conflicts, we use a model of three Zones:



Zone 1 is the remote area in which we have no immediate influence or interaction. This is the Zone of greater society, governments, world politics, and major socio-economic conditions. We hear of the conflicts of this Zone through the media, and our daily lives are indeed influenced by what goes on there. But if we have no position or influence in that world, we cannot directly work with its conflicts. Indirectly we may have an impact by electing some of the actors of Zone 1, but we ourselves are not actors.

We may also increase our say in Zone 1 by working as grassroots or in NGOs work - civil society work. Actually there is a great hope and a strength in civil societies, if many people from Zone 2 join forces in order to influence and humanise the decisions of Zone 1.

Zone 2 is the area of face-to-face communication. This is the world, where we have our relations with family, friends, and co-workers. This is where we talk with the

teachers of our children, the social workers of our neighbourhood, the shopkeepers, the hospital nurse, the staff who takes care of our old people, the policemen etc. It is here we encounter our day-to-day conflicts, and here we can deal with them in ways that either enrich or deplete our lives. Here we are the actors, since here we are in direct contact with people.

Zone 3 is the area of learning and training how to deal with conflicts taking place in Zone 2. It is the workshop, the seminar, the training, the private study group or the supervision group. In this Zone we prepare how to improve our everyday handling of human problems. In Zone 3 we talk about our daily situations and in this zone we have the safety of mutual confidentiality and the benefit of sympathetic support.

In Zone 3 we can also learn to understand the remote, but vital discords of Zone 1, and we can prepare strategies for gaining greater influence in the universe of politics.

The three zones are interrelated. People in Zone 2 bear the consequences of international frictions, in the shape of defence expenses, sanctions, mobilisation and wars. Decisions on trade, health and environment directly mark everybody's life in Zone 2.

The interaction also works inside – out, (see model). The attitudes and skills we acquire in Zone 3 can lead to great changes in our own personal lives and also in community life. In South Africa conflict management training took place in thousands of villages before the Change – and that may definitely have played a role, when a civil war was avoided. This example shows that the training of mindfulness in Zone 3 can make a difference not only in the everyday of Zone 2, but in the great events of Zone 1 as well.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE CHAPTERS *

1) *I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost... I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out*

2) *I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.*

3) *I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.*

4) *I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.*

5) *I walk down another street.*

DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICTS

What is inside a conflict – what does it consist of? Whether we ourselves are entangled in a discord or we stand outside it and try to help, the problem often seems endlessly confusing. There are so many elements, so many feelings – where to begin?

In reality there are countless dimensions in a single conflicts. To help establish a rough

* Portia Nelson – quoted in
“The Tibetan book of living and dying”
By Sogyal Rinpoche, San Francisco 1993.

overview we are listing four basic dimensions:

Instrumental dimensions

Dimensions of interest

Dimensions of value

Personal dimensions

The instrumental dimensions are at work when we disagree about objectives and methods: what to do and how to do it. At this level negative sentiments and reproaches may not yet pollute the relation. We just disagree and have to find a solution in order to get on with the matter. We must solve the problem.

We have this type of conflicts very often; they seldom lead to animosity and are often useful for creative decision making.

Dimensions of interest occur, when there is a competition for resources, which are sparse or appear to be sparse. The resources could be money (e.g. the price of something), time (e.g. spare time), and space (e.g. who's allowed to take up most space?). At home, it may be the allocation of rooms, housework and leisure time. At work, the dispute is often about working plans, facilities and wages. At a larger scale, there is the fight for power, territories and economic dominance. Globally there is a struggle for basic necessities of life, water supply, and other resources of nature. In conflicts of interest we have something solid between us – and therefore we may negotiate and find solutions.

Dimensions of value appear in a conflict, when values that are precious to us are at stake. These are values, we are willing to stand up for. It might be moral antagonisms. What is rightdoing, and what is wrongdoing? It might be values of our tradition, or of religion, political belief and dedication to human rights.

The personal dimension of conflicts often infects our personal existence and everyday life and creates vast confusion and suffering. Here, deep and sometimes hidden feelings

play the leading role, and the parties become uncertain and vulnerable: do the others regard me as somebody? Does anybody at all see me? Can i trust them? Are we kept out? Do they despise us? Are we being respected?

Some of these feelings have to do with long-ago and forgotten happenings of our childhood.

The fusion. In real life these types are often completely entangled. When two colleagues are having a dispute about where to place a computer it may look like an instrumental conflict. But it may at the same time be a conflict of interest (who has the right to use the computer) and a fight for power or esteem.

In the eighties, when the USA and the USSR were negotiating disarmament, the two governments were not able to agree upon where to meet or the shape of the negotiation table. This may look like an instrumental conflict, but it was probably more a conflict of interests like economy and world supremacy. Maybe even a personal conflict - statesmen also have strong feelings although they claim to be 'objective'.

But if it is true that the dimensions in fact always are merged into one another, what is the purpose of distinguishing? What's the point of a model like this? Why spend time on analysis?

Because in any conflict there will be one of the dimensions that is more significant than the others are. We call it *the centre of gravity*. It is useful to sort out threads from this basis. If there are deep emotional problems in one part or both, then these emotions have to be addressed in a dialogue, and only after that we can expect the persons to act sensibly and stick to the point. Furthermore, if there are real and serious conflicts of interest between two parties, then these interests must be addressed, and the discord can not be managed as a problem of emotions.

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT:

Instrumental dimension

About: Tangible issues like methods, procedures and structures.

Approach: Problem solving

Desired aim: Solution

Dimension of interest

About: Allocation of resources like time, money, labour and space.

Approach: Negotiation

Desired aim: Agreement.

Value dimensions

About: Political, religious, moral values

Approach: Dialogue

Desired aim: mutual understanding

Personal dimensions

About: Identity, self worth, loyalty, rejection etc.

Approach: dialogue

Desired aim: Mutual understanding.

Different approaches for different conflicts!

Please be aware that we have to notice the central pint in a conflict in order to decide how to cope with it.

Instrumental and interest conflicts may be solved by negotiation. We can discuss how to do things (instrumental dimension), and we can discuss what benefits to obtain (interest dimension). We can even reach to agreements and solutions.

But we cannot negotiate our beliefs (value dimension) to find some compromise. And we cannot negotiate our feelings (personal dimension). What we can do, is to have open communication and dialogue about them. If

this dialogue takes place, the result may be that we come to better understand the other person and ourselves. That creates a friendlier atmosphere, which eases the negotiation of the opposing interests and instrumental points of view.

CONFLICT ESCALATION

No two conflicts are alike, they are all unique, no matter where they take place: in the individual, between two persons, between groups, in society, or internationally.

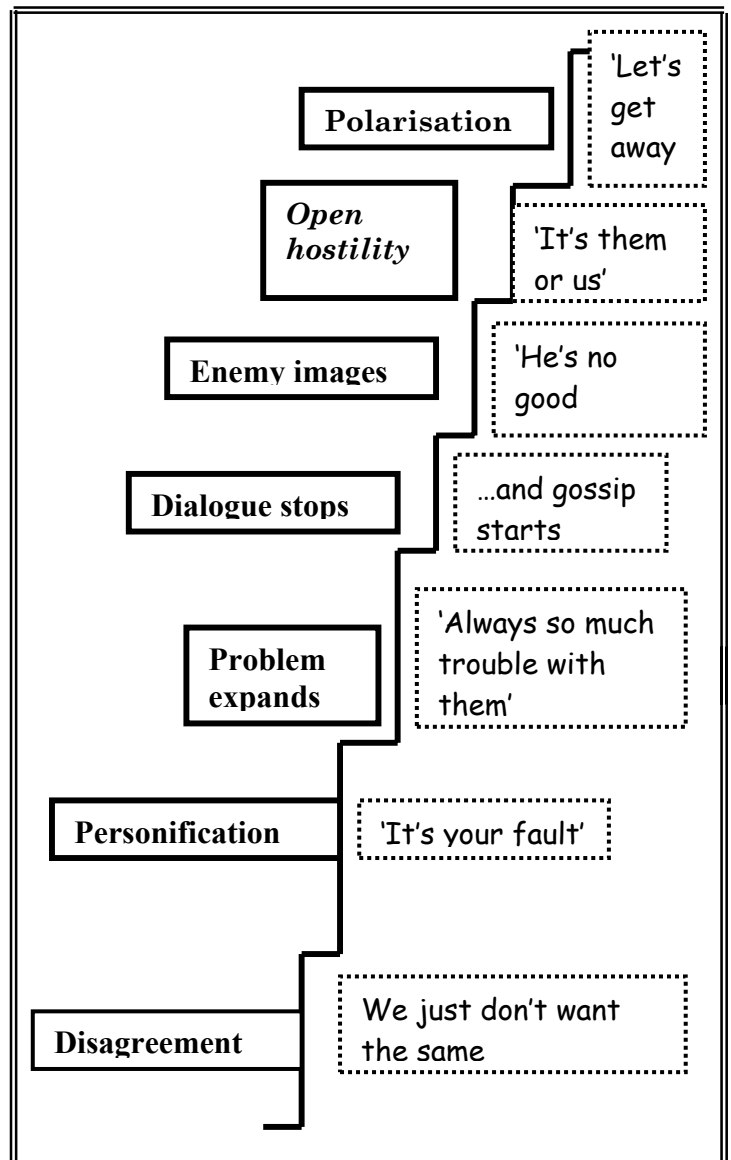
Not two fingerprints are the same, and not two disputes. Individual persons, a specific culture or sub-culture, a generation, the gender and the concrete social context will mark every single clash.

However, there seems to be a pattern for destructive escalation. It is like a psychological code, some kind of script in accordance with which we act, when we let conflict run with us. This pattern appears to be somehow universal.

It's good to know the script. Being aware of it may lead to a certain reflection: do we want to play the given parts of the script, or do we wish to act more independently and mindfully?

This model below originates from Northern Ireland, and we have processed it with people from many cultures. They seem to recognise the pattern

UPHILL: CONFLICT ESCALATION



THE STEPS UPHILL

Disagreement

First we have a "pure" conflict; the parties try to solve a problem that has come up, and to bridge their difference in opinion about how to think and act. At some point there is a noise on the line, and the channel is blocked. One of the persons starts attacking the other, and the interaction ascends to the next stage.

The borderline between disagreement and personification: this borderline is crucial. If it has once been exceeded, the irritated atmosphere and the confusion can rapidly escalate. Usually one of the persons starts to reproach, threaten or offend, and the other person joins the quarrel.

Hence, right at this borderline the training for conflict de-escalation makes sense. How can I respond mindfully to the aggression, without yielding from my goals? The further we ascend the conflict steps, the harder it gets.

Personification

At this point, it's no longer the problem that is the problem, but the other person. Both persons feel it is the other's fault, and negative emotions like irritation and fear begin to muddle up the picture. We blame, attack and defend ourselves. We feel confused, attacked and uncomfortable. We start suspecting each other's intentions and we begin to stamp the other's character. Our minds become denser and less clear.

The Problem expands

Now we come to think of many other flaws and defects in the other party, other problems he/she creates. Suddenly we remember unfinished business with the other; old unsolved conflicts emerge, together with the recollection of old injustices. The tensions grow.

Abandoning dialogue

The negative emotions blur our ability to think, and we communicate inaccurately. We don't speak clearly and we certainly are not able to listen with attention. We twist each other's words; we can't really hear what is said. This is sometimes called 'the dialogue' of the deaf. Conversation becomes too disagreeable, since obviously words are not sufficient, and we think "haven't I said so one hundred and one times, it's no use". We begin to avoid talking *with* each other, and instead we talk *about* each other, to others. We communicate through acts – different kinds of verbal or even physical violations.

We search for allies, and we form parties. Talking *about* each other in stead of *with* each other is a clear indication of aggravation, but will it always make conflicts escalate? Not necessarily - it depends on the purpose, the manner, and the result. Talking to an outsider about the conflict may make us more clear and ready to re-establish the lost contact - or it may close, stamp and stupefy, (see the chapter on *mindful conversation*).

Enemy images

The more we close up towards the other, the more locked up and explosive the relationship becomes. The other party turns into a subject of projection, we see in the latter everything bad that we do not want to recognise in ourselves. At this point, the original disagreement has almost disappeared, and our goal is now to prove right, to triumph or even to harm the other.

It is he or I, an eye for an eye, heroes and villains, fair and fowl. *We* are right; our goal at present is to prove right all the way. Only one reaction from the other part will suffice: concession, apology, total surrender. We have become fundamentalists.

An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind.

Mahatma Gandhi

The conflict has become like a magnet, like a black hole in the universe: it sucks in all light and energy, and we are so occupied with it that we can hardly speak of anything else. We loathe it and are at the same time attracted to it. The road is open to:

Open hostility

We are no longer able to see the others as human beings like ourselves, who basically want peace and fairness, and who suffer by the conflict. Therefore, we are able to exceed to open, hostile actions, bodily or verbal.

In major group conflicts, extremists are now taking care of the contact, and with devastating results. They have become more or less autistic, so their regard of the enemy has very little to do with reality. The end justifies the means. Moderates have been excluded on both sides. As they still regard the enemy as human beings, they want negotiation, and they try to see the matter from both sides, but often without success, since they are regarded as traitors. Harmful actions may now accelerate, from bullying to civil wars.

Polarisation

At this point, the parties are no longer able to stay in the same place. This is the time of divorces, sackings, notices of resignation, flight, and establishing ghettos. One takes flight, or is driven away.

The best thing to happen now is that the parties have no further contact, the worst that they carry on with the war from a distance. And then, there is *always* a hope, since the possibility of reconciliation always exists in human hearts.

Some points

- ◆ The model does not sketch a law of nature, but a basic pattern that all too often occurs - unless we choose to act differently.
- ◆ The model does not explain why and how wars (direct violence) and oppression (structural violence) arise. •

Erich Fromm says in his great opus "An Anatomy of Human Destructiveness":

"Wars do not arise from human destructiveness, they are planned by leaders to obtain certain objects".

- ◆ Governments and their media often use the dynamics of conflict escalation to get public support for a military intervention. They use the script deliberately, whipping up or creating a hostile atmosphere, to back up warfare. Therefore the dynamics of escalation is useful to know, in order to be more independent and immune to war propaganda.

...Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed...

From the preamble of the UNESCO Charter

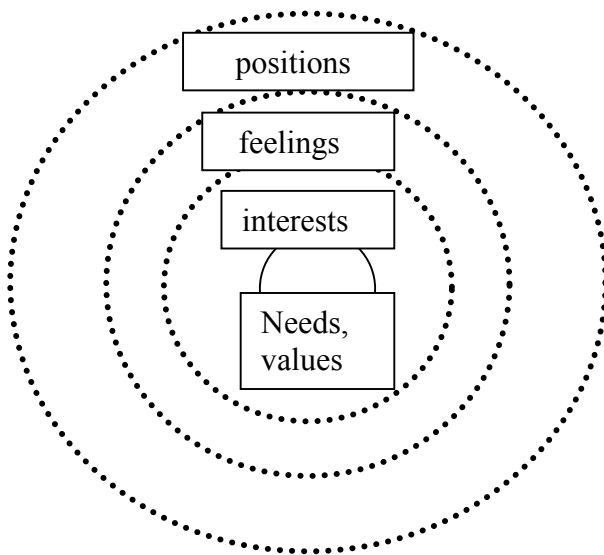
• The distinction between direct and structural violence is elaborated by Norwegian Peace Researcher Johan Galtung

MAPPING A CONFLICT *

When we deal with conflicts, especially at group or community level, they can seem quite chaotic. In order to get clearer about them it is practical to make up a conflict map.

There are many ways of drawing a map. The essential is, that when you do it, you may be able to see the conflict more “from above” and see it’s elements more clearly.

A basic sketch of *all* conflicts could look like this:



Positions are what the conflicting parties demand, and it is also their understanding of the situation and their own role – positions *can* be negotiated.

Feelings connected to conflicts are often fear and anger that are present, though not outspoken – feelings can not be negotiated.

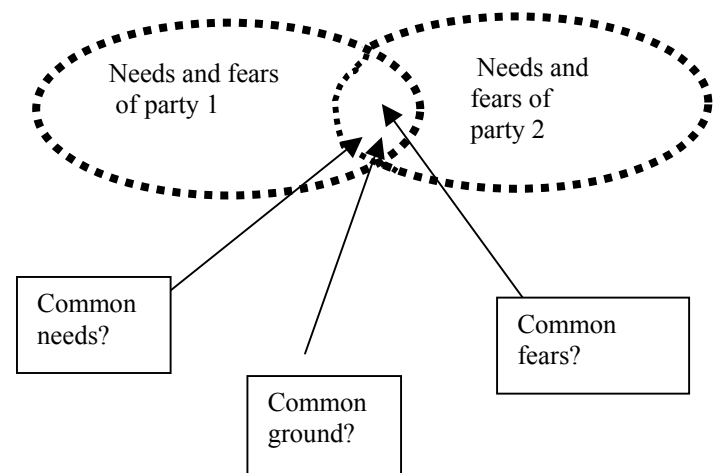
Interests are what the parties *really* want, their underlying motivation. What resources are vital to them? Interests *can* be negotiated.

* These maps are inspired by International Alert’s *Resource Pack for Conflict Transformation*, London 1996

Needs are fundamental, essential requirements, usually not outspoken – needs can *not* be negotiated.

Values are basic qualities, which are held to be very important – they often support the positions. Values can *not* be negotiated.

The rough mapping of an actual conflict might look like this:



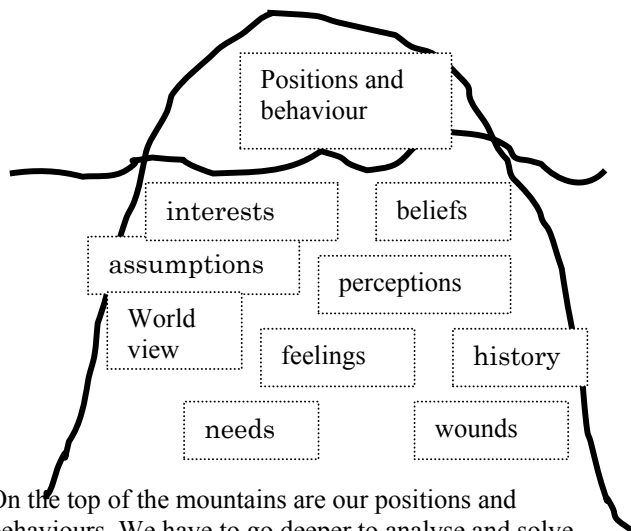
There are no “correct” maps. Mapping is just a practical tool for analysis - to use in order to become more precise and calm, when dealing with complicated matters.

NEEDS

WHY WORK WITH BASIC HUMAN NEEDS?

The idea of defining basic human needs is to have a framework for conceiving what a meaningful life is. We will look at needs that not merely refer to survival, but also to well being, identity, meaning and freedom. The purpose is to understand that we all have these kinds of needs. When we realise that we also see that right from the deepest level we have something essential and precious in common.

This common ground is essentially what makes us recognise and understand each other. In our discords we tend to forget that, as we are fully occupied with defending our positions and opposing other people's positions.



On the top of the mountains are our positions and behaviours. We have to go deeper to analyse and solve our human problems. Needs are crucial.*

Conflict resolution is about trying to find our common ground. It is from this ground that we can cultivate solutions to our problems and renew our relations. Therefore it is vital to look into the universe of needs.

FOUR KINDS OF BASIC NEEDS

The Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung has worked with conflicts and needs for many years. As an outcome of extensive dialogues in many parts of the world, he has defined four classes of basic human needs: *

- ◆ Survival needs
- ◆ Well-being needs
- ◆ Identity, meaning needs
- ◆ Freedom needs

* This model is developed by Multi-Track Diplomacy, Washington, USA

* Johan Galtung: Cultural violence. In Journal of Peace Research. Vol. 27.no.3 1990

In order to determine, whether we are dealing with a personal need or a basic human need we can use Galtung's thinking. What happens if needs are negated?

- ◆ Negation of **survival needs** leads to *death and mortality*
- ◆ Negation of **well-being needs** leads to *misery and morbidity*
- ◆ Negation of **identity and meaning needs** leads to *alienation*
- ◆ Negation of **freedom needs** leads to *repression*

Violation of personal needs do not have such grave consequences.

Let us take an example about identity and meaning needs. *A young person needs education.* In some societies this means school, college, vocational training and university. In other societies it means learning the traditions of the tribe, often taught by father to son or mother to daughter. It may be farming, fishing, pottery etc. For certain societies these competencies are what is meant by education. So they can be seen, as basic human needs.

When it comes to the individual choice, like wanting to be an auto mechanic, a cook or a doctor, we are dealing with personal needs. These are not to be played down, we just have to be aware, at which level we are operating. So the need for education in general we will see as a basic human need, whereas specific wishes for education we will see as personal needs.

We believe that basic human needs are global and that they at the same time have cultural nuances.

BASIC HUMAN NEEDS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The core of conflict management is via dialogue and nonviolent means to reach a deeper level of understanding and establish satisfying and long lasting solutions for all the involved parties.

At the same time, the meaning of basic human needs shows us that something is right and something is wrong. Right from the angle of bringing life to a more fruitful and peaceful level, and wrong from the angle of bringing more sorrow and animosity between people.

Conflict management will probably always live in the border zone of not being judgmental and not forgetting *rights and wrongs*.

In order for a trainer in conflict management to avoid subjective judgements, the idea of basic human needs can be of help, since these needs can be seen as something that goes for everybody, a global idea. Still, we must admit that basic human rights are interpreted by the person who speaks about them.

HOW TO USE THE IDEA OF BASIC HUMAN NEEDS?

In 'basic conflict resolution' and mediation processes we most often operate on the levels of interests and personal needs. We are likely to reach a solution, when personal needs are spoken out and met

Whether it is a process between two people or a process with a mediator, the art of conflict transformation enters the scene when needs are met and understood. This is the magical turning point.

We all have good reasons for holding our positions as they include our interests. These interests are important to us for many reasons. The most important reason is that interests are the carriers of our personal needs, and beneath

personal needs are our common and basic human needs.

This might sound a bit laboured, and it certainly is, for life is not made of tables and systems.

Nevertheless when we voluntarily try to solve our discords and give each other the space to tell, and when we listen carefully to each other's positions, feelings, interests and needs, – then we very often recognise elements in our opponents story. Then we may, consciously or not, realise that we have common needs. These may be at the personal level, and in many cases at the basic level as well. Often the basic human needs will not reach the level of ordinary consciousness.

In recognising each other's needs we also recognise each other as human beings and consciously or unconsciously we realise that we have the same deep needs, basic human needs.

But there could be situations where you as a trainer or a mediator will have to say stop. It could be in a mediation where the involved parties come to a solution that you find unethical or in discord with basic human needs and social justice. In that case you can remain professional, since you don't have to pass your private judgements. By referring to basic human needs you can ask the parties to try finding other solutions. Or you can say that you no longer want to be part of this mediation because you don't want to take part in violating basic human needs.

Nonviolent conflict management and basic human needs should not be in opposition to each other.

AT THE PRACTICAL LEVEL.

Fortunately life is far more complex than structures, ideas and rules.

Let's take an example. In a town there is a little hospital. The capacity is 35 patients, but the town has about 65 patients, who need hospital care; some kids, some adults and some old people. A suggestion is raised: "let us use our energy firstly on the children and when that is done, let's see what space we have left".

In this example there are many solutions, but the point is that conflict management has to relate to the practical situation in which it occurs.

Conflict management lives in a border zone of not violating basic human needs, and at the same time being realistic according to the context of the conflict.

Basic human needs is an idea, a very important idea, because it forces us to understand that we all depend on some common needs, be they physical, social or spiritual. But many people spend their life below the level of basic human needs and still survive. Human creativity will hopefully be stronger than charters, rules and regulations. And in the future, charters, rules and regulations will hopefully help us to understand and respect basic human needs.

A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

AN UNHAPPY COMPANY

Dorjee and Thupten are two brothers in their twenties. They are sharing a modest room. Both are refugees in India, having arrived from Tibet 4 years ago, after a dangerous trek over the Himalayas.

Dorjee is a hard working student of English and Dharma, and has been promised a job, if he passes his exams. His younger brother Thupten is also supposed to study, which he does not.

The brothers are very close to each other but lately they have had harsh arguments. Dorjee needs a lot of calm in order to study, but Thupten disturbs him by talking, playing his flute and pacing the floor restlessly. He brings friends home, and they gossip and play loud music till late. Dorjee is worried and irritated, Thupten is sulky and distant. Dorjee keeps blaming Thupten, but Thupten just turns his back to him or gives him a sullen answer. The brothers can't afford two rooms, and their parents back in Tibet would be upset if they split. Some days ago Dorjee hit Thupten, who then left the room and stayed with friends for two days. Then he returned and an unhappy silence stayed in the room.

DORJEE

Dorjee is an introvert and shy person, who likes reflecting and studying passionately. He likes solitude, but nevertheless he feels lonely. He would like to have friends, but it is not easy for him to chat and make jokes. Sometimes he dreams of having some fun in his life; at least some talks with people, maybe a party now and then. But he is so busy and has this heavy responsibility of his brother's life and future. What shall become of Thupten, if he does not study?

He promised his parents to look after Thupten. He does not believe in Thupten's talent for music, which he does not know much about. He misses all the fun that Thupten gave him before. In a way he admires Thupten because friends come so easily to him and because of his lightness.

It is Dorjee who keeps the contact with the family back home, and he is in fact lying to them about Thupten, saying that he studies hard and makes progress. He would like to get out of this mess. He is alone with the problem. He is shameful that he hit Thupten and that he could not control his anger. He would like to restore their friendship, but how?

THUPTEN

Thupten always was special, a boy full of dreams and fantasy. He has a gift for music and for joking. These qualities were not exactly appreciated in his home, his father being strict and his mother always worried. Since he came to India he has enjoyed his new freedom and found a lot of friends and stimulation. He has a vision of becoming a musician and also a possibility, since he found a teacher of flute who believes in him. This he has not told Dorjee, since he is afraid that Dorjee would put him down, as his father would. He loves and respects Dorjee, but is tired of him always being "the good guy", blaming and trying to improve him. He talks to his friends about Dorjee and they just think he is an obstinate and boring. They encourage Thupten to quit Dorjee as soon as possible. Thubten feels guilty because he has talked about his elder brother behind his back.

He has a natural belief in Buddhism, so why study its theory? He learns English perfectly well without studying by talking with foreigners. So why go to class? He is furious because Dorjee hit him. He would like to be friends with Dorjee on equal terms, but it is impossible.

Some questions to the story

In general: It seems only sad that the brothers are having this hard time with each other. But do you see any positive aspects in the conflict? Could it do something good to the lives of the brothers?

Zones of conflict: The story takes place in Zone 2 – but is it influenced by Zone 1 and 3? How?

Dimensions: Which dimensions do you see in the dispute? Which is the dominant dimension?

Escalation: How far have the brothers gone uphill? What actions brought them there? What actions could bring them downhill?

Mapping: Try to draw a rough map of the problem. Do you find any possible common ground?

Basic human needs: Would you find that some of Thupten's and Dorjee's basic human needs are being violated? It could be their needs of survival, well being, identity & meaning or freedom? What are the consequences of their negation?

MEETING CONFLICTS

There are in fact so many causes and conditions for enmity. Within these many causes and conditions, your way of conducting yourself is also included.

H.H. the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala 29.11.2001

THREE WAYS OF RESPONDING

Among the millions of reactions that we as humans have at our disposal we are listing three main paths. We cannot avoid meeting hostility or offences, but we may learn to respond mores wisely to them. Which path we are able to choose can make a great difference.

3 WAYS OF RESPONDING TO CONFLICTS

Flight: To evade, wear a mask, ignore, postpone, wait, bend.

Fight: To attack, defend, threaten, blame, or use verbal or physical violence.

Opening: To acknowledge the situation, to dare to examine it, to check, ask and be clear

All three responses are common; we use all of them from time to time. But if flight or fight become rigid reactions of the individual, or of a group as a whole, change may be needed.

There is a great difference between deliberately evading, because it is the wisest thing to do in a certain situation, and automatically evading, because it is a personal

habit to submit or take the easiest way out. The same goes for the response of fighting.

Evade or attack

These are two classic reactions, when the adrenaline prompts us to either run or hit. There can be good reasons for both reactions, but they do resemble each other in that they cut off any real contact with the adversary and with the problem at stake. They are not parts of a solution, but an escalation of the problem.

Many people say that they are afraid of confrontations and that they are evasive. Others have the wrong idea that conflict resolution is about being nice and submissive. Many conflicts arise from being aggressive and *not listening* properly, but it is likely that just as many arise when we do *not express* frankly what we really mean to say, and when we do not say where we draw the limit.

Conflict resolution is about self-respect, standing up for one's values with nonviolent means, it is not giving in or submitting.

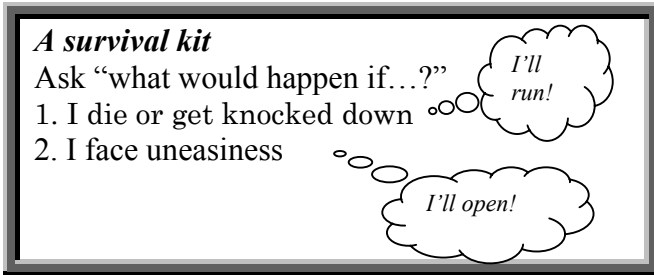
No man could be actively nonviolent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurs.

Mahatma Gandhi

Meeting a conflict openly

This simply means to make out what is going on before letting the adrenaline take over, to ask, to “taste” the criticism, to examine the situation. In this way we can open many of the conflicts we meet.

To act in this way means to be willing to have a contact with the person, who is opposing us and to confront the problem that causes the offence. It takes some practice, because being open is not often what we have learned at school or at home.



ISSUE AND RELATION

What response we choose when confronted with conflicts may also be due to our attitude to the actual problem and the person we are dealing with.

Our concern for the problem at stake can be higher or lower: How important is the issue to us? How much do we care?

Likewise our concern for the person can be higher or lower: How much do we care about this person? Is it someone we respect, fear or have affection for? Someone we depend on? Or someone we just have a superficial contact with?

How much do we care?

If our concern for the person who creates the difficulty is higher than our concern for the issue, then we might deliberately choose to evade.

If our concern for the person is low, and our concern for the issue is also low, then we can hardly see the situation as a problem: we don't really care.

If our concern for the person is lower than our concern for the issue, then we might choose to fight.

And if our concern for the person is high, and our concern for the issue is also high, then there are good reasons to open the conflict. If we wish to maintain our relation with the person, and the issue is also very important to us - then we can only reach

our goals by making a real effort and a frank opening.

*

A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

Life continued. Dorjee still cooked the meals and was otherwise buried in his books. Thupten was more restless than ever and not often at home. They still slept close to each other, and the silence was unbearable.

One day Dorjee could not take it anymore. 'Listen', he said, 'I'm sorry about hitting you, I shouldn't have done that, but it makes me so mad to see you hang around without ever doing a sensible thing. You really should take some more responsibility!'

'Oh you think so', said Thupten sarcastically, 'I'm sure you as the father of the house can easily tell me what I should do - I'm so damned tired of you bossing me around - do this and do that - you are so self righteous that it gives me the nausea'.

'But I must take care of you, otherwise you will end up like some unemployed bump or drug addict. You are not studying, I haven't seen you open a book for weeks, you just hang around with those no good friends of yours, or you play with your flute, and you don't even let me study - always making noise, always making problems'.

'You know what?' said Thupten very coolly, 'since I'm such a nuisance to you I think I know what to do. I'm leaving, right now, and I'm not coming back, ever'.

'Where are you going' asked Dorjee shocked.
 - 'Actually it's not your business'

* This linkage between issue, relation and conflict patters is formulated in "Goodwill Classroom", group MOST, Belgrade 1997

- 'Yes it is, Please tell me where you are going'. Dorjee was scared now.

'I'm going to stay with a friend, and if you are worried about how I'll get money for the rent, I can inform you, that I've got a part time job at a guesthouse'. Thupten started packing his things and Dorjee scrambled with the dish washing. At the door Thupten hesitated and Dorjee said: 'Please stay'. 'Why should I stay', asked Thupten somewhat hopefully. 'Because, said Dorjee shaken, 'because somebody has to look after you, otherwise you will get into trouble, and our parents will be....

But Thupten never heard what their parent would be. He had already left and slammed the door behind him.

Some questions to the story

Fight, flight and opening: how do the brothers respond to each other's attacks? What openings do you see? What make the openings close again? What could have made them stay open?

Issue and relation: How do you see Dorjee's and Thupten's concern for their standpoints? How do you see their concern for their relation? What are the differences between the two brothers' concerns? How does that show in their quarrel?

THE LANGUAGE OF CONFLICT SOLVING

When you speak to others, you might speak at the right time or at the wrong time, according to fact or not, gently or harshly, about the goal or not, with a mind full of love or with a mind full of hatred”

Siddharta Gautama, Majjhima Nikaya, I: 369

OPENING AND BLOCKING COMMUNICATION

Communicating is to have verbal or non-verbal interaction. It is to speak and to listen. There are ways of speaking and listening that block our channels to the others and to ourselves, and there are ways that open.

An opening communication can be learned and practised. But it can never be a technical skill. It has to come from the heart; it has to be authentic. Otherwise it does not make a genuine opening.

I-language and You-language

This is fundamental in understanding conflicts: We all have our own perception of our surroundings and ourselves. My perception is invisible to you. I alone know how my landscape looks and that only partly.

If you define me, you are attacking my territory, and I will start defending myself. That makes a dispute escalate.

In Western psychology there is a lot of talk about guarding one's limits, in order to stop others' invading our sovereign area. That may be valid but as we see it, it is not enough. When I draw a line I defend myself and avoid an invasion of my landscape. That can be very useful. But I am not

making sure that you understand what I want. And I am not at all making sure that I understand the other person.

If I want to achieve mutual understanding, I must explain what lies behind my frontiers. I must tell you about the landscape behind my borders, about what is on my mind. What I feel and what I want.

In the I-language I talk for myself, I take responsibility for myself and stay on my side of the field. I tell you what is on my mind, what I see, feel and wish.

When I approach your landscape I do so by asking respectfully to what you have on your mind. I do not blame, interpret or diagnose you. I ask and I listen.

The I-language is relaxing and opening because it does not molest the other person and because it opens up and that clarifies. It is very simple and very difficult to put into practice. And again: This is not a moral must. It is a possibility that we can choose if we want openness.

*They blame those who are silent,
they blame those who speak much,
and they blame those
who speak in moderation.
There is no one who is not blamed*

*There never was,
There never will be
Nor is there now
A person who is fully blamed or praised*

Siddharta Gautama, Dhammapada, 227-29

OPENING	BLOCKING
Genuine regret & forgiving	Superficial excuse
Expressing own concerns and need	Blaming the other
Showing real interest	Neglecting the other
Explaining own facts	Ignoring opposing the other's facts
Listening to the other's story	Interrupting the other's story
Calming & reassuring (future relations)	threatening
Sticking to facts	exaggerating, generalising
Being sincere	using sarcasm
Expressing one self, listening to the other	defending one self, attacking the other
Attacking the problem: what to do?	attacking the other: Who to blame?
Frank language	rude or evasive language

This scheme is made by the TCCR team.

SOME ESSENTIALS OF OPENING OR BLOCKING LANGUAGE

Interrupting or listening

Why do we interrupt? Probably to maintain and force through our own perception of reality and not let the other person's (wrong) points of view prevail.

But however painful it may be to listen to the other person's story it is still necessary if the conflict is to be eased. And how mind expands when it happens!

A lot of conflicts are based on misunderstanding the universe of the other

party. Often we forget to ask the other person what he/she thinks. Maybe we are afraid of negative opinions. Luckily the truth about what he or she thinks about us is almost always less threatening than in our imagination.

Ignoring or showing interest

The conflict escalates when we treat the other person without respect. It is healing to anybody to be treated with respect and interest. Not just the by the spoken language but by the attitude, the body language and eye contact.

Leading or open questions

The open questions are inquiring - we already know the answer of the guiding ones. They are a part of verbal combat. Quite often it is not even the questions themselves but the tone of voice and hence the attitude that makes the question guiding or open.

Blaming or expressing one's wish

Blame is widely used as a form of communication, but the outcome is doubtful. It is often more useful to express what you wish or need, than to blame somebody because you do not get it.

Generalising or being concrete

In abstract language we often use words like the general "one" or "ought to". We grant rules and views to the other party and make the responsibility vaguely general. We use the words 'always' and 'never'. In the concrete language we stick to the actual case.

Past or present

It can be useful to disentangle the facts of the past. After grave violations our truth about past hurts must be spoken and recognised before we can forgive. Also in everyday discords we have to clarify what went on. But dwelling in the past and nagging about it may escalate a conflict. Talking more about possible steps to take in the future may be more fruitful and less molesting.

Attacking person or problem

The important thing is to distinguish simply between the act and the person who carries out this act. Between Gandhi's "wrong doer" and "wrong doing". We are not able to change as long as we are being defined negatively.

THE ART OF DIALOGUE

It may be understood by a person's conversation whether or not he is competent at constructive discussion. If, on being asked a question, a person loads scorn on and beats down the questioner, laughs at him and tries to catch him out when he falters, then he is incapable of discussing things

Siddharta Gautama, Anguttara Nikaya, I: 197.

Democracy and dialogue

Dialogue is the core of conflict resolution. It is also at the core of democracy, since democracy – in our understanding – is to solve the conflicts of society by help of dialogue, as opposed to power enforcement. "By the word, not by the sword", as Hal Koch – a Danish political thinker – expressed it. It is exactly the public dialogue within the people and between the people and the government that shows how far a democracy has developed.

The word 'dialogue' comes from the Greek word dialogos, dia meaning 'through' and logos meaning 'word'. So it just means to talk together. In the context of democracy dialogue simply means to maintain talking together instead of using power to have one's way.

Many ways of talking together

There are many ways of exchanging words and they all have their specific function:

Conversation – Interview – Discussion – Debate – Quarrel – Interrogation – Sharing – Negotiation – Dialogue – Dispute – Gossip – Testing - Joking – etc. etc.

What we mean by dialogue

In this publication we use dialogue in a rather precise sense, and we distinguish between dialogue and other forms of language.

The purpose of dialogue is to understand better – understand an issue, understand one self, understand the other. The purpose is not to convince, nor to compromise or to decide anything. It is not to negotiate and not to persuade.

In dialogue we try better to understand each other's values, feelings and needs– and to make our own feelings, values and needs clear.

We explore the meaning of an issue, and we explore our mutual relation. We are willing to learn something new, willing to change and become wiser.

In dialogue we do not see differences as barriers or attacks on our own ways. We rather see them as bridges, something interesting, that might enrich our lives. In fact we try to appreciate the differences among us.

How we may act in an argument and in a dialogue:

DIALOGUE	ARGUMENT
We try to learn	We try to win
We try to understand	We try to convince
We listen to become wiser	We listen to find faults
We express ourselves	We defend ourselves
Nobody loses, both are enriched	The loser surrenders
We contain our differences	We are more similar now

THE LIMITS OF DIALOGUE

Our overall purpose is to promote nonviolent conflict management. *Nonviolence* always includes respect for basic human needs. We define *violence* as “avoidable insults on basic human needs”, whether it is direct or structural violence.*

When we try to solve conflicts the art of dialogue is an important instrument, whether we ourselves are involved in a dispute or we try to help other people settle their dispute. Dialogue is used when we explore each other’s needs and values in order to better understand.

We have just characterised dialogue as ‘being willing to learn new’ and as ‘appreciating differences among us’.

If the root of a conflict is a violation of basic human needs, dialogue can be helpful in a certain phase, in order open the channels to the opponent and to find common ground for the concrete negotiation.

But if the party who is violating basic human needs, persists and intends to continue the violations, then it is no longer the time for ‘appreciating the differences among us’ or to ‘learn something new’. Now is the time to stand up for our basic values – like nonviolence, based on respect for basic human needs. These two can not be separated.

Dialogue is a magnificent way of contacting each other at a deep level. At the same time it is not the only method of nonviolence. It is very difficult to use when a conflict is played out in an *asymmetric power relation*. If the powerful party is violating basic human needs

* According to Norwegian peace researcher professor Johan Galtung.

How our DIFFERENCES look in a dialogue and in an argument.

DIALOGUE	ARGUMENT
resources	hindrances
bridges	gaps
channels	frontiers
windows	walls
exciting	irritating
interesting	scandalous

other nonviolent measures can be taken. There are many other ways – and they all have the aim of preparing a situation where dialogue is possible.

Martin Luther King who all his life struggled for his Afro-American people with nonviolent means once said, “sometimes you have to create social tensions”. Sometimes the superior force is so great that you have to use strong means to get through to it.

+Some nonviolent actions - to prepare the road to dialogue:

Mass petitions - slogans, banners and posters - skywriting and earthwriting - mock awards - mock elections - prayer and worship - symbolic lights - paint as protest - plays and music - vigils - pilgrimages - demonstrative funerals - teach-ins - silence - turning one's back - protest strike - slowdown strike - suspension of sport activities - social disobedience - stay-at-home - consumers' boycott - sit-down - fasts - dumping - seeking imprisonment

ACTIVE LISTENING

This is one of the most simple, difficult and giving skills of clearing up and opening conflicts. In fact it is much more than a technique, it is a genuine and receptive attitude to the other person.

Active listening means putting oneself aside and at the same time being totally present. It means to focus on the other

⁺ Some of 198 actions listed by Gene Sharp in *The politics of nonviolent Action*, Boston 1973

instead of on one's own opinions, attitudes and ideas. It is the other person, the speaker, who is the main character. Here follows some pieces of advice that might be useful.

- ❖ Offer the speaker your **full awareness**, and show it in your body language and eye contact
- ❖ Listen not only to the words but also to the **feelings, needs and intentions** behind the words
- ❖ **Clarify** if you understand what the speaker means: *'are you saying that...'* *'did I understand you rightly when you said...'* *'what do you mean when you say...'*
- ❖ Support the other's narrative by **repeating** some words, **summarising**, keeping a **receptive silence** and asking **open questions** like *'how...'* *'can you say more about...'* *'what did you think when...'*
- ❖ **Avoid to take over the conversation**: no judgements (*this is good and this is bad*) no advice (*you should...*), no associations from you own life (*this reminds me of...*). You are just there to listen and understand.

THE INTERVIEW

When we interview somebody, we actually wish to get some information. It may be facts, opinions or ideas. To that end an *interview guide* can be helpful.

Interviewing is not the same as active listening, though active listening is part of it. Here follows some pieces of advice for the interviewer, developed by the TCCR team:

To cultivate

- ❖ Asking clear, brief and open questions
- ❖ Using active and careful listening
- ❖ Listening to thoughts, feelings, needs, intentions

- ❖ Being patient and friendly
- ❖ Respecting the other's point of view
- ❖ Showing genuine interest
- ❖ Being clear about the topic
- ❖ Talking informally, being relaxed
- ❖ Creating a friendly environment
- ❖ Daring to put frank and difficult questions
- ❖ Forgetting yourself, focusing on the other
- ❖ Going deeply
- ❖ Navigating cleverly in painful feelings
- ❖ Steering the interview kindly when the other gets off the track

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

NVC is a method for transforming conflicts into dialogues. The clinical psychologist and mediator *Marshall B. Rosenberg* has developed NVC during his thirty years' practice and research. Its core is to understand and express one's observations, feelings, needs and requests instead of finding faults and shortcomings in other people. The other side of the coin is to explore other people's situations, feelings, needs and intentions instead of mistrusting and fighting them.

This system is a deep and powerful tool in conflict resolution, and we highly recommend Marshall Rosenberg's book⁺.

A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

After Thupten left, Dorjee sat motionless for an hour. He was in a state of chaos. He thought that if he only had done the right thing, he could have prevented this, he could have made Thupten stay. But what was the right thing?

⁺ Marshall B. Rosenberg: *Nonviolent communication – A language of compassion*. PuddleDancer Press, USA, 1999

Thupten was really far out - where was he now? Did he really have that job or had he run into something bad, something criminal? No, not Thupten, he was actually not that kind. Dorjee felt wretched, he was a failure, and he had not been able to take care of his brother, though he had promised his parents.

Thupten went to his friend's room and settled, he felt angry and relieved at the same time. His friend complimented him for having quit, and Thupten wished his friend had kept quiet. Later they went to some other friends and played music all night.

Thupten's days were busy with friends and music. He was helping his flute teacher to plan a Free Tibet local festival the following week. The teacher had even asked him to do a short flute solo. Thupten was happy, living the life he had longed for. Only he did not sleep well, and he sometimes had fits of bad temper over some detail in the festival arrangement. Once he met Dorjee in the street and just waved hello to him. Dorjee looked worn. That night Thupten did not sleep at all. This can't go on, he thought, I'll not be able to perform on Saturday.

Thupten's girlfriend Dolma, whom Dorjee knew nothing about, had noticed Thupten's unsteady moods. She urged him to go and talk with his brother. 'But what should I talk with him about, I know he'll start scolding in the minute I show up'. Dolma said that Thupten could just tell Dorjee how he was doing, try to make friends with him, invite him for the festival. But Thupten said, 'no, he'll start bossing me around again, blaming and all'. 'Just ignore that', said Dolma.

So Thupten went to see Dorjee, who became immensely happy, without showing it. He fixed some tea, and while doing that he promised himself not to blame his brother and not to lose his temper.

So they sat down and talked - Thupten told about the festival and the solo, and invited

Dorjee, who was trying to listen but constantly had in mind that Thupten should come back, he should study, he should do as the parents expected. So he was kind of absentminded, and that irritated Thupten. 'Did you hear what I told you', he asked, 'did you hear that I have a teacher, and that we are arranging a festival and that I'm going to play solo and that I invited you?' 'Of course I heard you' said Dorjee, 'but I still think you should move in again and start to do what we came here to India for, namely to study, you know father and mother are expecting us to do that, and you never did'.

Now Thupten forgot all his good intentions and shouted to Dorjee that he was self righteous, boring, and impossible and that he would not dream of returning. Dorjee talked about his responsibility as the elder brother and of Thupten's silly fancy of becoming a musician, which he could never earn a living by. Shortly after Thupten left - their conversation had lasted less than twenty minutes.

Some questions to the story

Openings: What opening thoughts, actions and words do Thupten and Dorjee show here? How about Dolma?

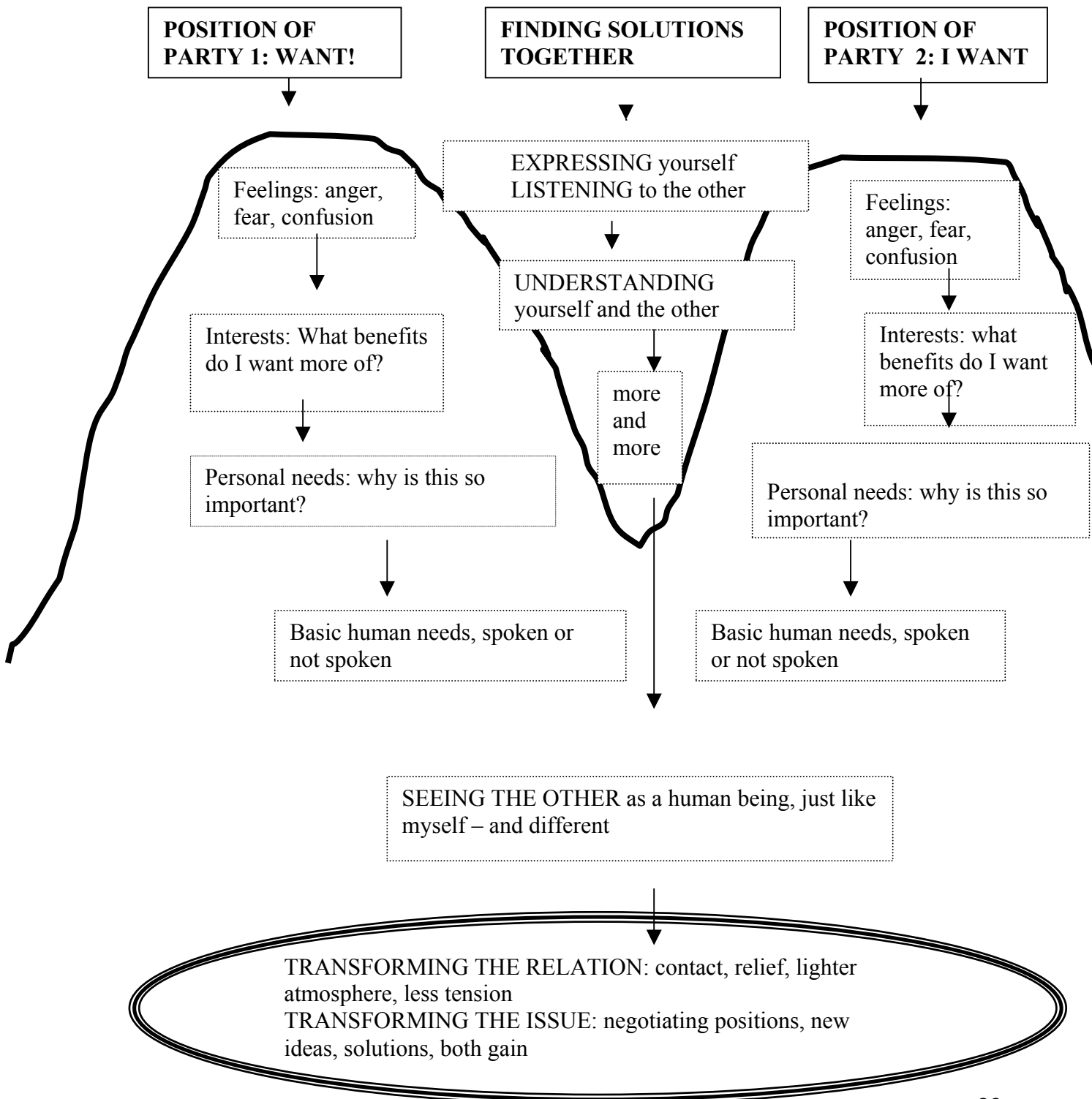
Blockings: What blocking thoughts, actions and words do Thupten and Dorjee show here? How about Dolma?

Dialogue: Try to analyse their conversation, according to the skills of dialogue.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

DOWNHILL: BASIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- a transforming process



WHAT IS IT TO SOLVE A CONFLICT?

An explanation of the downhill sketch

The methods of conflict resolution in our work are based on two concepts: Issue and relation. Whenever a dispute occurs, there are disagreements about a certain issue, and something has gone wrong in the relation of the people involved.

The more concern the persons have for the issue, and the more concern they have for their mutual relation, the more serious and painful is the situation for them. If the conflict has escalated to a point, where they have given up interaction, it is difficult to go back, but maybe it's possible. What can be done is to follow the simple but troublesome steps downhill. The persons who have clashed may settle the issue and open their relation by themselves, or they might need an impartial mediator or friend to help them find back to their track.

For the conflict to be solved two aims should be fulfilled:

- to find sustainable and satisfying solutions to the issue
- to re-open the blocked relation.

In order to address issue as well as relation, certain actions are needed:

- The persons clearly speak out their **positions**
- They disclose the **facts**, as both see them
- They speak about their **feelings**
- They clarify their underlying **interests**
- They express their deeper **needs** and try to understand each others needs
- They find various **ideas for solutions** together
- They **agree** on the best ones.

The more serious and important the conflict is to the persons involved, the deeper they have to go in order to restore or

improve their relation and to find solutions that both gain by.

The optimal conflict resolutions occur when the issue as well as the relation between the parties transforms. When the parties have expressed their feelings, interests and needs openly and listened to the other's feelings, interests and needs, the parties may re-establish their contact. They begin to recognise each other as beings of basically the same kind, though different.

This is painstaking work, but when it happens, the hostile tensions seem to evaporate. In stead enters relief and a much lighter atmosphere. Then the persons might see, that their positions are not that crucial, and that there are many different ways of satisfying the interests and needs of both. Then it becomes relatively easy to find solutions.

A more pragmatic conflict resolution may have the result, that the parties agree on a compromise that both can live with, and that their animosity lessens. Maybe that is all the parties find necessary. This is anyhow better than draining each other's energy and joy of life by fighting.

It may also be, that the discord can not be settled for the time being. Not all conflicts can be solved. Enmities may be too mighty, heavy and complicated for any rational skill. This being said: Many conflicts that seem overwhelming may be opened and eased by mindfulness.

THE STEPS OF BASIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION

These steps are obvious in their simplicity yet they do reflect a certain way of thinking, and they are not easy to put into practice because they may be contrary to our habits and our acquired conflict behaviour.

The steps should not be seen as a process that goes of once and for all, regularly and in

succession. That may happen but things take time and heavy things take longer time and possibly several attempts.

responsible. That actually you may even need each other.

BASIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Direct contact

Agreeing to disagree

Accepting to try resolution

Take some steps back
Maybe use a facilitator
Decide time, place and
Ground agreements

Both parties get time and space to

Tell their stories
Express their positions
Express their feelings

Agreeing on the headlines

What are the main outlines of
the conflict?

Expressing and listening to needs and
interests

Underneath the positions
Underneath the feelings

Brainstorming solutions

Finding many, choosing few

Making clear and realistic agreements

Making sure that both are satisfied

Direct contact

If you can agree to disagree you are already on your way out of your emotional confusion.

Accepting an attempt

This is a crucial step, without which any technique is useless. Both parties must have the desire to move on. This is when you begin to realise that you might have your share of the conflict. That the other party is not solely

Some GROUND AGREEMENTS that may be made before the resolution process

- ‘We don’t give up easily, but give it another try, even when it seems hopeless’
- ‘We try to listen to each other without interrupting’
- ‘We try to avoid malicious ‘
- ‘We try...’

Each person tells his or her story

Now the direct communication, which has been cut off, is opened. It is difficult to relate again. It is also hard to listen, because what the other person is telling may seem unjust and absurd. ‘*It simply is not true*’. Maybe you wish to interrupt the other, to give up the whole thing or to shout. Hence the ground agreements. The *positions* put forward by the parties will often be far from each other and seem irreconcilable. *However it is not from the positions that the solutions will arise.*

Agreeing on headlines

Together the parties will find the main features in the conflict. It is a powerful step if the persons can formulate each other’s point of view. Then the persons fix an agenda: Which problems do we have to solve? It is a good idea to begin with the simplest ones.

In order to understand another person you must walk in his moccasins for ten days.

Native American wisdom

Expressing and listening to interests and needs

This is the transformation point in conflict resolution.

If we stick to our positions it is hard to come to an agreement. At best a compromise is reached which both parties agree on. This is not bad but it may leave both parties dissatisfied. This is the commonly used *compromise solution*.

Creative conflict resolution

Another possibility is *creative conflict resolution*. This has the ambitious aim that both parties come out as winners and with a better relationship.

The core of *creative conflict resolution* is that the object of the disagreement is not just divided but expanded. This can only happen if you look to the underlying interests or even to the more basic needs.

A classic example is this story. Two women were quarrelling over a big orange that both wanted. "I want the orange", was the position of both. An obvious solution was to cut it in halves. In that case both would have 50% of what they wanted. But then a wise man entered the scene and asked the women for what purposes they desired the orange. He asked for their interests behind their positions. One woman explained that she needed the orange peel to make a special jam with. The other woman wanted the juice to make a drink of. Now a better solution was obvious and both could have their need 100% fulfilled. By asking into their interests the wise man had *enlarged the object of the strife*.

It is only possible to get through to interests and needs by listening carefully and expressing one self.

If we see each other's interests and needs we are often close to our *common ground*. If we

find that ground it is easier to develop solutions to our conflict.

Interests and needs

These two can be defined in various ways. The way we use them here is:

Interests are rather concrete. They are the resources or benefits we want more of, beneath our positions. They are broader than our positions and open to more solutions.

Needs are our longings beneath the interests. Needs are often related to identity, emotions, and non-material dimensions. This is the very reason they open up a wide range of solutions.

An example. A female office worker demands to have her time schedule changed, to start work every day as late as 10 a.m. This is her *position*. She wants less morning rush and more time. This is her *interest*. She wants more togetherness with her children. This is her *need*.

Brainstorming solutions

Now we may develop a number of solutions, negotiate them and settle with a few. We should take time, and not decide too early. This can be a very relieving phase that is characterised by sudden changes in moods, because we have seen each other's longings and concerns. The atmosphere may transform, from distrust to goodwill, from bitterness to kindness, from persistence to generosity. The tensions evaporate. But still, we have to be realistic.

Making sure that both parties win.

The general feeling can be so pleasant that we might forget to ensure that the chosen solution is realistic and truly satisfying for both parties. Therefore we must see to, that our agreements are realistic – also in a week, a month and a year.. It might be an idea to 'sleep on it' and take up our conversation, when we are more coolheaded.

A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

- Your happy or unhappy ending.

Although Thupten's attempt to talk with his brother had failed, he felt somewhat better - he had at least tried. He felt less guilty, and he had a lot of energy.

Dorjee was once more in chaos, not knowing what to think and do, nor having anybody to discuss it with. On the evening of the festival he went there, standing on the edge of the lawn, in the darkness. A friend of Dolma spotted him and showed him to Dolma. She approached him, introduced herself and started chatting with him. That made Dorjee less shy. She took him up to the front where they could better see and hear Thupten when it became his turn to perform. Thupten looked cool but very pale in the sharp light and the tone of his flute was delicate and beautiful. The applause was enthusiastic. 'Wasn't he great' said Dolma and Dorjee nodded. He never thought his younger brother could do anything that was appreciated by so many. He felt kind of proud and very confused.

When Thupten came down Dorjee said 'I did not know you could actually play the flute'. Dolma took the occasion to invite the brothers for dinner with her girlfriend at her room next day.

The dinner was rather tense and the two girls had to drag the brothers through kind of a conversation, as they did not address each other directly. After dinner the girls had a talk in the kitchen while the brothers said nothing, and Dolma made a statement: 'Either you guys start talking about your dispute or you go home - for this is no fun'. The brothers agreed to talk and the four of them sat there together.

What happened then?

Some questions - and your suggestions

The girls are not professional mediators; they are just normal, sensible people. Nevertheless they act as mediators. If their attempt to help the brothers is to succeed, the conversation will somehow include the steps of basic conflict resolution, the steps downhill. So what would that be? You might like to discuss it, or to play the conversation as a role-play.

Positions: how would the brothers express their perception of the situation and their demands?

Feelings: How do the two brothers feel and how would each of them express it?

Interests: What resources (time, space, benefits) does Thupten want more of and what does Dorjee want more of?

Personal Needs: both have some secret longings and some open needs. Which could they be? What can make Dorjee reveal his hidden needs? How about Thupten? What common ground do they have?

Basic human needs: what basic human needs do they have and share? Would they express any of them? Would they see them?

Meeting interests and needs: How can both brothers' interests and needs be satisfied?

Brainstorm: try to find various practical solution that would meet the interests and needs of both.

How does this story actually end? – How does the future of the boys look? How about the parents? How about Dorjee's elder-brother- responsibility? How about Thupten's dreams? How about money? How about Dorjee's loneliness?

SUPERVISION AND MINDFUL CONVERSATION

Supervision is a special conversation, in which we support somebody who presents a problem to us. The aim is that the one who seeks supervision becomes clearer: how to understand my problem and what to do?

Supervision is like an umbrella, a concept having many or supporting disciplines. These are *active listening, being emphatic, interview techniques, dialogue and feedback, basic conflict resolution and nonviolent communication*.

Right here we shall distinguish between two forms of supervision, One deals with personal problems, and is here called *mindful conversation*, and one deals with professional problems, here called *supervision*. You can use mindful conversation whenever a friend or colleague, who is involved in a confusing discord with somebody, approaches you to ask for your advice. And you can use supervision to support somebody who faces a professional problem in his/her job or everyday.

Mindful conversation

takes place between one person who is carrying a problem and one person whom he/she has asked to help find new ways to deal with the problem.

When a conflict escalates we may reach the 4th step, where dialogue stops. Now we are no longer talking with each other, but talking about each other. We have to find the dialogue again. Sometimes a conflict can be so confusing and heavy on us that we have to seek help and talk with another person. This talk we call a mindful conversation.

In mindful conversation we can talk about our opponent in a conflict, because now our motivation is no longer animosity or seeking allies, but a wish for clarity. We have realised

that we are not able by our self to handle the situation.

Then we may take the next step, to ask advice from another person, who is *not* part of the conflict. This indicates that we are no longer caught in the magnetism of the conflict, and that at least a part of our mind has awakened.

When this takes place, the steps of Basic Conflict Resolution can be very useful, not in a stiff way but as a checklist for the problem holder and the mindful partner.

Sometimes Nonviolent Communication can be a way for the problem holder again to approach the person with whom he/she has the conflict. It is vital for the problem holder to become clearer, and here the steps of NVC are helpful to support the inner dialogue:

- What actually happened? (My *observations*)?
- What are my *feelings* about it?
- What do I really *need*?
- What *next steps could I take*?

The mindful partner too can help the problem holder to get closer to his/her own answers by using the steps of NVC.

Again, one who wants to admonish another should first investigate: "Have I developed a mind of goodwill, free from malice towards my fellows? Is this quality established in me or not?"

Siddharta Gautama, Anguttara Nikaya, V: 79

Some points of mindful conversation

The problem holder

- ◆ Is the one who gets the attention and who needs empathy
- ◆ Gets a possibility to have a new view on himself / herself and the situation
- ◆ Gets the needed time
- ◆ Decides the issues of the conversation
- ◆ Has the right to avoid answering
- ◆ Is the owner of the problem
- ◆ Is the one who wishes to get wiser

The mindful partner

- ◆ Gives full attention to the problem holder
- ◆ Listens attentively and actively
- ◆ Is supportive, not necessarily agreeing
- ◆ Asks open questions like: Who? What? When? How?
- ◆ Uses his/her intuition
- ◆ Is impartial, not taking sides with anybody
- ◆ Does not judge anybody
- ◆ Withholds own solutions
- ◆ Withholds own associations
- ◆ Avoids defamation and comments on the opponent of the problem holder

When the problem holder has the possibility to tell the whole story to an impartial and supportive person, new elements will occur.

Sometimes it does not go in this direction and then the ideas from *feedback* can be of help. At the end of the process when all possibilities are exhausted, the mindful partner can give his/her advice.

The friend who gives good counsel is a true friend for four reasons. He discourages you from doing wrong, he encourages you to do good, he tells you things you have not heard, and he points out the way to heaven.

Siddharta Gautama, Digha Nikaya, V: 2.

Mindful conversation and supervision - a distinction

Supervision has to be as mindful as mindful conversation. The difference is that in supervision we are no longer dealing with personal problems, but with professional problems. Supervision is a special way of dealing with problems or conflicts. The idea is to have a skill to handle difficult situations, a theoretical framework for direction and safeguard.

But the complexity of life is stronger than any theory. We will for sure find professional elements in *mindful conversation* and we will also find personal elements in *supervision*, so the distinction is merely a guideline. There is not a wall, but rather a modest fence between them.

If so, why do we distinguish between *supervision* and *mindful conversation*? Because mindful conversation is meant to be used, when we give support to one of the parties in a conflict. And in a conflict many feelings are at stake. Anger and vulnerability often go hand in hand. Being emotionally torn apart often hits us at a deep level. It can hit something we are or something we miss. It has to do with us as the persons we *are*.

Professional issues often have to do with something we *can* or cannot do or understand. There is a great difference between what we *are* and what we are able to *do*.

Supervision

Supervision can take place between two persons or in a group. If it takes place in a group the persons can take turns of getting and giving supervision. It has to be clearly stated who is receiving and who is giving supervision, in order not to create confusion.

The core of supervision is to empower the person who is receiving supervision. Therefore active listening and interview technique are useful, in order to make the

issue stand clear, and to help the person getting supervision to find appropriate solutions to the problem presented.

Again if you as supervisor have to give advice, then wait until the person asks for it.

Hindrances to empowerment

The supervisor should avoid

- ◆ to offer solutions and advice, when not directly asked
- ◆ to give a lecture on the discussed issue
- ◆ to bring forward own examples
- ◆ sarcasm
- ◆ mental precondition (knowing the right answer on beforehand)
- ◆ explanations
- ◆ judgements
- ◆ taking sides

SOME ADVICE

- Empty your mind to contain the other person
- Keep focused on the issue and the other person
- Use active listening and interview techniques
- Agree to a distinct form of supervision

Organising supervision

There are many ways of giving supervision. The simplest one is when two people sit alone and decide how to carry on the supervision

Another way is to do supervision in a group. One person comes up with a problem and chooses his/her supervisor. Now the rest of the group can act as reflecting team or as observers.

A third possibility is again being in a group, two persons having decided to give and receive supervision. At the end of the session the supervisor asks the rest of the group to discuss among them what they have heard and what suggestions they have to the issue.

During the actual supervision the group remains silent and listens, maybe taking notes. When the group is discussing the supervisor and the one who received supervision remain silent.

Finally the supervisor asks the receiver whether he/she able can use something that was said during the group discussion. There is no dialogue between the person who received supervision and the rest of the group.

The Lord said to the monks: 'Once upon a time, a bamboo acrobat set up his pole, called his pupil, and said: 'Now, my lad, climb the pole and stand on my shoulders. The pupil did what he was told. Then the master said: 'Now, my lad, you protect me and I will protect you, and protected and watched by each other we will do our act, get a good fee, and come down safe and sound from the bamboo pole. But the pupil said: 'No, no, master! That will not do. You look after yourself, and I will look after myself. Thus watched and guarded each by himself, we will do our act, get a good fee, and come down safe and sound from the bamboo pole. That is the way to do it'. Then the Lord said: 'Just as the pupil said to the master 'I will protect myself' – so should you practice the foundations of mindfulness, which means at the same time: 'I will protect myself'. By protecting oneself, one protects others'

Siddharta Gautama, Samyatta Nikaya, V: 168.

MEDIATION IN ZONE 2

*Quarrel exists even in the land of gods
And conciliations exist even in the land of the
cannibals*

Tibetan proverb⁺

Mediation has probably taken place in most human societies for thousands of years. Wise and respected elders, men and women, have helped their communities to mediate when disputes, fights and quarrels have disturbed the harmony. Globally a great variety of mediating traditions can be found. This also goes for the traditional Tibetan community.

What we present here is a classic approach to mediation, which is widely implemented through the numerous centres for conflict resolution that have materialised during the last 30 years. *

Conflict resolution, as we understand it, is closely linked to a concept of democracy, which means to solve conflicts by means of dialogue, not by means of enforcement of power. Mediation is one of the tools.

Mediation is closely linked to the steps of Basic Conflict resolution (see passage on BCR)

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

⁺ The proverbs quoted in this chapter are from: Tibetan Proverbs. Compiled by Lhamo Pemba, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1996.

* This article is inspired by a mediation manual of Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution, Copenhagen 2000, written by Steen Clausen. We are also much indebted to Dr. Vibeke Vindeløv, DCCR and the University of Copenhagen.

Definition

To mediate is to support conflicting people to find their own solutions to their conflict through dialogue and negotiation and thereby improve their relation. The mediator acts impartially and respectfully. The mediation is voluntary and confident.

“To support conflicting parties”:

This is probably the briefest way of describing the role of the mediator. He or she acts as a helper, not as a judge, a teacher or a policeman. He or she does more listening than talking, knowing that it is the people involved, who are the experts on their own lives and their own conflict. The mediator knows how to facilitate the meeting between them, to help them get in touch with each other again, so that they can find the outcome that is best for both of them. When the expertise of the mediator meets the expertise of the persons, then the mediation process may become a unique and powerful meeting.

“to find their own solutions”:

If the mediator suggests or decides on the solution, it may work for the parties, especially if they have genuine respect for the mediator. But it may also happen, that the parties immediately accept the solution, and after a while one of them or both feel discouraged and disappointed. The result may not really solve their problems, it may not work in real life, and the relation is still tense.

This is because they in fact are the ones who are best qualified to know what they need and what will work for them. They are the persons who have been living with and suffered from the situation.

If the mediator can lead the process in such a way, that the parties' willingness to listen to each other and to speak frankly grows,

the solution will arise from the minds of the two persons as a result of their interaction. In that case the solution belongs to both parties, and it has a chance to be sustainable. The two persons will wish to carry out the decision and be true to it, because they have taken it themselves.

*Ask for others' opinions
But decide on your own*

Tibetan proverb

“through dialogue and negotiation”:

Dialogue and negotiation are two different and distinct forms of conversation. Dialogue is about making clear what is on your mind and understanding what is on the other's mind. It is not to convince or to submit, and it does not aim at obtaining a practical result. Negotiation is about finding solutions. It is giving and taking, and it aims at obtaining a practical result. Both forms are needed in mediation.

“and thereby improve their relation”:

If the persons are able to express themselves frankly and listen to each other, they might reach to the point where they in fact understand each other somewhat better than before. In that case their immediate relation has improved, and it will be much easier for them to negotiate solutions that are good for both. If this happens their future relation becomes friendlier and clearer.

*The ocean that basks in pride for its depth and vastness
Is but the total integration of many small rivulets*

Tibetan proverb

“the mediator acts impartially and respectfully”:

To demand total neutrality of the mediator would not be realistic. We all hold values that are precious to us, and we cannot deny that we also have our sympathies and aversions. The more we are aware of our personal biases the better we can function as mediators.

If a mediator finds that he or she is too biased, then he or she must let a more impartial mediator take the job.

To act impartially and respectfully means that we treat both persons with equal respect, awareness and interest. To be impartial is really crucial. The good mediator is on nobody's side, or rather on both parties' side. He or she truly wishes them to reach each other and reach to solutions that can enrich their life situations.

If one of the persons feels that the mediator is taking side for the other party, the mediation can not succeed. The neglected person will feel discouraged or bitter and will of course not be able to co-operate.

“the mediation is voluntary”:

The ideal condition is when both parties wish to find an answer to their problem, because the situation is unbearable. They agree on finding an impartial mediator, and they agree on the actual choice of a mediator. Nobody has forced them to the negotiation table.

This may occur in real life, but far from always. Sometimes leaders demand that two parties reach to an agreement, because their conflict disturbs the social life at the working place. So the parties have no choice if they wish to stay.

Sometimes the parties are not able to select their mediator, because it is their boss or another authority person. Such a situation should be avoided, unless the person of

authority is able to totally abstain from power-enforcement.

As a thumb rule though, it is important that both parties have confidence in the mediator, and that they both wish to try mediation. If not the chances of finding durable and genuine solutions are but small.

*To bait a fish
In a dry ravine*

Tibetan proverb

“The mediation is confident”:

The conflicting parties are often vulnerable and they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. To take part in mediation is often rather fear- provoking.

So they have a right to confidence, which means that a mediator never reveals to other persons what he or she has come to know during the mediation about the persons and their problems. Never, not to anybody. Not when asked by the employer of a person. Not even to their mediator-colleagues. If a mediator seeks professional help by a colleague or a supervisor in order to improve their mediation skills, he or she needs not tell the names of the persons or organisations involved in the conflict.

The ground rule of the mediator’s silence is fixed. At the start of the mediation the two parties may make agreements on how to secure that their knowledge about each other does not become destructive gossip in the community.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

Is it an advantage that the mediator holds power and authority? That depends on what meanings we attach to these words.

Power can mean that a person has power *over* others and thus can use sanctions if they do not act according to his will. If that case the mediator’s power can hamper a genuine and honest outcome, because the persons involved will feel frightened and pressured. It would then be more useful to find an independent mediator.

Power may also mean that a person has power *with* others, is respected because of his or her abilities and motivated by a wish to co-operate, promote a common goal and empower other people. He or she does not have sanctions to enforce people.

Authority likewise has several meanings. It can be used in the sense that a person “is an authority as a mediator”, which means that he or she is respected for personal qualities as a mediator, which can only be advantageous.

Authority may also mean that the person holds a position of authority, which will often imply that he or she has sanctions to be used, and thus has power over others.

Finally authority may suggest that persons are authoritarian, they wish to impose their will on others and rather disapprove of democratic decision-making. Such persons make poor mediators, hardly being able to listen to and support others’ independent thoughts.

STEPS OF MEDIATION

The mediator is the one who is in charge of facilitating and leading the process. He or she is aware of what should be done in the process and he or she knows that there are certain steps, which must be taken during the process in order that the parties get a chance to reach each other.

The following steps signify a logical and natural process, and can thus be understood as the mediator’s checklist. But

the mediator does not have to stick rigidly to these steps and the order in which they are listed here. The natural flow of the dialogue between the parties might break the order of a classic mediation. And as the dialogue is what makes a mediation work, it should not be broken because the mediator wishes to “stick to the rules”.

At the beginning, when you make your first experiences as a mediator, it is nevertheless useful to keep to these steps. If later you choose to “jump” in the disposition, it is good to have it at hand as a checklist.

THE STEPS OF MEDIATION

BEFORE THE MEDIATION

Who, when, where? How to proceed?

THE MEDIATOR’S OPENING

What is going to happen?

Codes of conduct.

Accept from the parties

DIALOGUE

What is it all about?

Positions

Feelings

Interests

Needs

NEW AGENDA

What can be negotiated?

What needs further dialogue?

Common ground

SUGGESTING SOLUTIONS,

which meet the persons’ interests and needs

NEGOTIATING SOLUTIONS,

which meets the persons’ interests and needs

MAKING AN AGREEMENT

CONCLUSIONS AND GOODBYE

BEFORE THE MEDIATION

When the mediator has been contacted and asked to do the mediation, some research needs to be done, in order to know the general and rough outline of the situation, so that you can prepare how to go about:

- Who are the conflicting parties? Are they individual persons groups or organisations? Who should participate in the mediation? Sometimes there are more than two parties, when the conflict takes place at a working place, in a family or in an organisation or working group.
- What is the conflict about, in broad terms? How complicated is it? How many mediation meeting do you think it would take?
- What do the parties wish to obtain by the mediation? What is at stake? Why have they decided on mediation? Do both – or all – parties wish meditation? Why have they chosen you as the mediator?

You also have to consider. Do I wish to undertake this task or should somebody else do it? Are you impartial in the conflict or are you too close to one of the parties? Do you have the time to really give the assignment awareness?

In many cases it is very useful to be a team of two. Who could the other mediator be? The two of you will have to agree on your roles. Normally one is the main mediator and the other the co-mediator. You have to be very clear about your functions. Sometimes the co-mediator is used to observe the process closely and give the main mediator feedback and advice during breaks. Sometimes the co-mediator takes part in the questioning. This has to be transparent in order to ensure a firm and secure facilitation.

The venue of the meeting, or meetings, must be considered. In many cases it is useful that the parties meet on neutral ground, not where the conflict is played out. An informal setting may relax the tensions. But not so informal that the parties loose respect for the mediators

During research the mediator should show his or her impartiality clearly. Both –or all – parties should be asked. If you have separate meeting with one party, you should also have it with the other. Preparatory meetings can be held with both or all parties.

THE MEDIATOR'S MENTAL PREPARATION

For one who is a learner and has not yet come to the mastery of his mind, but who dwells aspiring for peace for bonds, making it a matter concerning himself, I know of no other thing so helpful as giving close attention to his mind.

Siddharta Gautama, Itivuttaka, 9.

You are now going to meet the parties and their conflict. You will meet the chaos of a human conflict and you will meet people who have strong and unpleasant feelings.

You can in fact do something to build up your inner calmness. Maybe you would like to spend some minutes alone and use the methods that suit you best in order to “find yourself” and your peace. And to focus on your motivation to help these people in their difficult situation.

THE MEDIATOR'S OPENING

The main challenge is that the people who come for mediation do not really know what it is. They also feel insecure and maybe uncomfortable. They do not know you and they have probably some aversion to the other party.

*Without climbing the cliff of adversity
One cannot arrive at the meadow of happiness.*

Tibetan proverb

The parties may arrive together, or separately. Anyway try to create a more relaxed atmosphere for them: make sure to welcome each party respectfully and kindly, and bring them to a comfortable seat. Before the mediation starts you might talk informally with them about some everyday topics.

When both parties have arrived you open the meeting. The following disposition may be useful:

- You present yourself and welcome the parties. And then you talk about these points:
- Mention that they have come to the mediation **because both wish to find solutions** and to improve the situation. Ask them if that is so – and have both parties answer your question
- **The mediation is voluntary.** It can be stopped whenever they wish so.
- They will **find their own solutions**, and you will help them whatever you can. You will facilitate their dialogue and negotiation. And the good result will be due to their effort.
- You really **hope they will succeed** to solve their problem, but there is no guarantee.
- Some **codes of conduct** are necessary: you can mention your absolute **professional secrecy** – how about their wishes for mutual confidentiality? You can advise them to listen to each other without interruption and to use a relatively polite language, without losing frankness.

During this initial conversation with the parties make sure that all have understood and that all agree to these basic conditions.

*One must dance
In accordance with the beat of the drum*

Tibetan proverb

THE DIALOGUE

The aim is to have the two parties talk *together* in such a way that they express themselves, listen to the other and thereby hopefully reach to a broader understanding of the other and the issue at stake.

At the beginning though the conversation rather takes the form of an interview where you ask the parties what is on their minds. But the aim is that they talk *together* at some point. This you could tell the parties. You may also tell them that the aim of this part of the mediation is to clarify the conflict, to investigate how each person experiences it. The aim is right now not to convince or fight or find solutions. Just to understand the whole thing better.

First you will ask them what the conflict is about and how each of them sees it. You may begin by asking the person, which you feel is most under pressure. Try to get many precise facts, and to have each express his or her position and demands clearly.

This being done you could summarise their statements as objectively as possible and examine if they agree on your description.

*A sore in the mouth must heal in the mouth
A dispute in the house must be settled within
the house*

Tibetan proverb

Now it is time to have both parties unfold their story more deeply. The general and loose disposition could be the steps in “basic conflict resolution”.

Here active listening is the main tool of the mediator: listen with an open heart and a clear mind. Repeat sometimes what the person just said, “*and then you became very disappointed?*” “*So you found it hard to...*” You might also find the four steps of active listening useful: To listen to the head

(thoughts and ideas), the heart (feelings), the stomach (needs), and the feet (intentions).

When nothing is said, you might get nervous. No reason for that: A silence often indicates that something important is going on. Take your time.

*A quiet mouth knows no trouble’
A mouthful of tsampa is tastier than a quarrel*

Tibetan proverb

If the parties start to confront each other, you might fear that you are losing grip of the situation. But in fact this confrontation is useful. Now they are talking together. Let them do so, unless they attack each other so rudely that the conflict really escalates.

Please try to keep in mind that you are not responsible for the outcome of the mediation. You are just trying your very best to have the parties come on terms with each other, but you cannot change their motivation.

If you get confused and don’t know what to do, you can *always* take a break, and use the advice and support of your co-mediator.

When both parties have expressed their positions, facts, feelings, interests and personal needs, it is time for you to summarise again. Maybe you have already summarised a couple of times during the process. The words you use when you summarise are important and can add to the smoothness of the dialogue as well as to the precision. You might use a more neutral and constructive language than the involved persons did = reframing.

*If one is eloquent in speech
Even the hills nod in agreement
If one is harsh in words*

Even the hills grimace with anger

Tibetan proverb

Hopefully the dialogue has promoted a deeper mutual understanding of the underlying interests and needs of the two persons. If so the tensions between them have lessened, and a lighter and more positive atmosphere has arisen. They might now be able to see that there are several ways of meeting both parties' interests and needs. Thus it will be easier for them to revise their positions: maybe they are not the *only* or the best ways of solving the problem.

*Feelings that are expressed are like medicine
Feelings that are concealed are like poison*

Tibetan proverb

NEW AGENDA

If such openings have taken place during the dialogue, the parties will even be able to see that they stand on common ground. This means that some of their needs are shared by both. This common ground must be stated very clearly – that will ease the coming negotiations quite a lot.

Now the time has come for entering a new phase of the mediation. The mediator helps the persons to define the main problems to be solved. This is done by an active conversation between the mediator and the parties.

The main questions are:

- *Where do you agree?*
- *Where do you still disagree*
- *What issues are to be negotiated during mediation?*
- *And what issues need more dialogue, either during mediation or between the persons afterwards?*

The questions that can be negotiated are practical solutions, concrete interests and instrumental questions of “how to do”.

Some questions can not be negotiated, since they belong to the strictly personal field: values, personal and basic needs, attitudes and feelings. These can however be talked about in a dialogue with the aim of better understanding of one self and the other.

In summarising which questions to have dialogue about and which to negotiate, it is important that the persons involved participate actively. It is useful that the mediator writes on a big piece of paper or a board, and that he or she makes sure that both – or all – parties really agree on the further agenda.

SUGGESTING SOLUTIONS

Before the negotiation we must see to that the field is opened, so that there really are several possibilities to talk about. The idea is to go beyond the mathematical compromise – “you get 60%, I get 40%”. We have to think further, and to explore many ways of improving the situation.

Therefore the mediator may repeat what the needs and interests of the parties are. Then he or she may introduce the step of finding solutions by saying something like: *In what ways could your needs and interests be met? Please tell me what ideas come to your mind. We are just going to get some ideas we can work with. It is not the time to reject ideas now but to pool as many of them as we can.*

In this process the mediator is the secretary of the parties – he or she does not suggest or criticise solutions.

When the parties have told all their ideas, they can choose which to proceed with in negotiation.

NEGOTIATING SOLUTIONS

Dialogue is about understanding what goes on right now and what went on in the past. It is a bridge to the future. Negotiation is about planning what is going to happen in the future.

During negotiation the mediator helps the persons to co-operate in stead of arguing. He or she also helps them to be precise, so that the solution becomes clear. Clarifying questions can be asked: *What would be the consequence of this? How would you do that? When? Who is going to...? Would that mean that you...?*

Maybe the parties will start to negotiate values and feelings. In that case the mediator must keep them to the track and the agenda they have agreed upon.

The mediator must also be firm in sticking to that the solutions should meet both (all) parties' interests and needs.

And the mediator can help the parties to make realistic solutions by asking practical questions: *will it be possible for you to...? Are you sure you would have time to...? Do both of you think this will work in a month?*

MAKING AN AGREEMENT

When the parties have found solutions that satisfy both an agreements could be confirmed. In some cases you draw up a written agreement, which both sign. In other cases it is sufficient to have the agreement spoken. Anyway it must be clear-cut.

This is the responsibility of the mediator. The persons involved may have reached each other, seen each other as respectable human beings, dropped their enemy images and succeeded in solving the issue. Therefore they will often be relieved – sometimes even happy. They may be too optimistic as to the consequences of their negotiations in their daily lives.

*Too much attachment creates hatred
Too much sweetness creates nausea*

Tibetan proverb

Therefore it is always a good idea to let the parties “sleep on it” before they settle with an agreement.

*What one says must be practised
As a needle case must house thread*

Tibetan proverb

So the mediator must see to that the parties make an agreement that they really see as workable and enduring.

CONCLUSIONS AND DEPARTURE

Some mediations can be done within one meeting. Others will take several meeting. At the end of each meeting the process should be evaluated:

*What did we obtain?
What is still to be worked with?
Should we meet again?
Can the parties complete their unfinished businesses by themselves?
What do they think of the mediator's contribution?
Did they experience to be treated equally?*

If the parties find that the mediation process is finished now, the mediator might assure them that they can come again if so needed. He or she can also make an appointment with them to come again on a certain date in order to talk about how their solution works – if they wish so.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICTS IN A GROUP *

Which has to work together in the future

Sometimes groups run into problems that seem complex because so many are involved. And sometimes the problem is oversimplified: One person is seen as the only troublemaker. In both cases this method may be helpful, because it avoids mutual accusations. It makes everybody reflect: What did I actually observe? How did I add to this dispute? How can I help to straighten things up? Please be aware that a person can add to a problem by being active as well as being passive.

The group accepts:

- ❖ that there *is* a problem
- ❖ to *try* and solve the problem
- ❖ a *facilitator*
- ❖ a *method* that has to be followed

Sit in a circle without any tables between you

First round:

- ❖ Each person tells how he/she experience the situation
- ❖ During the process there is no discussion or interruption, all stories are valid
- ❖ The facilitator sums up the round in a loyal way

Second round:

- ❖ Each person tells how he/she contributed to create the problem
- ❖ No discussion - only listening, all stories are . facilitator sums up the round in a loyal way, reframing

Third round:

- ❖ Each person tells how he/she can contribute to solve the problem
- ❖ No discussion, it is a brainstorm
- ❖ The facilitator illustrates the possibilities
- ❖ Now the group can discuss practical solutions
- ❖ The facilitator makes sure everybody is satisfied

* This method is developed by the Danish psychologist Mette Geldmann

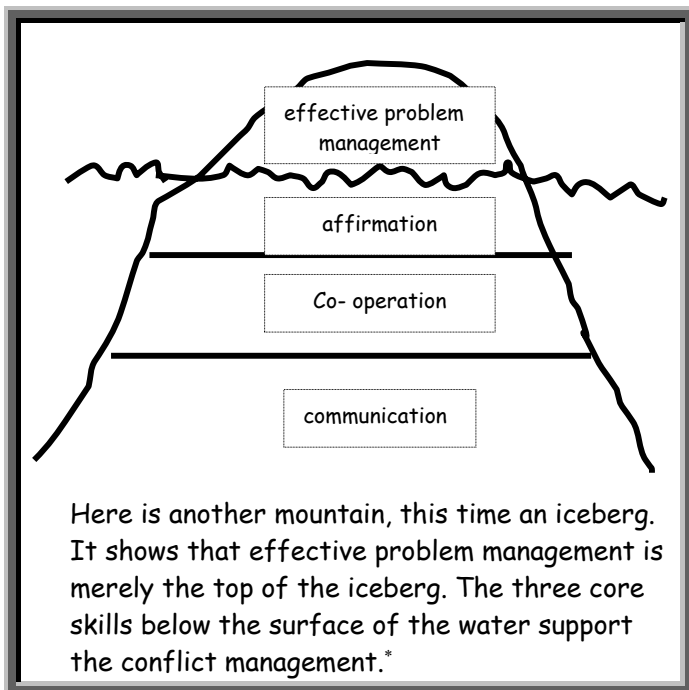
CO-OPERATION

Solving conflicts is to create harmony. We also must remember to create harmony, when there is no conflict.

Geshe Sonam Rinpoche

Of course it is useful to meet conflicts in a mindful way whenever they occur. But it is equally - maybe more - important to create an environment where this mindfulness is generally supported. If we can see our discords as parts of life and chances of growth, in our families and among our friends and co-workers, then a lot of suffering may be avoided.

THE ICEBERG PRINCIPLE



* The iceberg principle is made by "Children's creative response to conflict project, New York, and quoted in H. Stacey and P. Robinson "let's mediate, Bristol 1997"

Affirmation is to recognise somebody's qualities and actions - including our own. It helps raising our self-esteem. Communication is the flow of contact when speaking and listening, verbally or non-verbally. Co-operation is to take action together and nurture our group relations.

All the world's techniques of conflict resolution will be in vain, if we do not cultivate these three in our daily surroundings.

*Then Ananda came to the Lord and said.
"Half of the holy life is friendship,
association and intimacy with the beautiful."*

"Say not so, Ananda, say not so! It is the whole of the holy life, not half, this friendship, this association, this intimacy with the beautiful."

Siddharta Gautama, Samyutta Nikaya, V: 2.

TEAMBUILDING

Clear communication in a group with a defined task.

A great many unnecessary disharmonies arise, when working groups rush to their tasks without preparing mentally.

Maybe the group has carefully planned what to do and how to do it. But they have not been aware that it is also vital to prepare the co-operation and create a good atmosphere or team feeling.

Maybe they hardly know each other. Or they think they know, but it is only superficial. So the aim of teambuilding is to enable the team members:

- to know the **goals and visions** of the team and the individual.

- to know and accept the **concerns** of the team and the individual.
- to know and value the **resources** and qualities of the team and the individual.
- to know and understand the **limitations** of the team and the individual.
- to know what to do when **disagreements** or even conflicts appear.

Assembly, group and team

- ◆ An ASSEMBLY is a gathering of people, who may have common goals, like all the people that work in a big organisation, but they do not have a common task.
- ◆ A GROUP is often a smaller number of people with a common task and goal. They work together and have some knowledge about each other and each other's work, like in a small NGO.
- ◆ TEAM, is a small group with a common task and a feeling of togetherness. They are *fully aware* of the aims, limitations and resources of the individual member and of the team as such. And they have *spoken about* these things during teambuilding.

Teambuilding is to talk right to the core and disclose which resources the group has, and what lacks. *It is not to praise or judge each other.*

When we do teambuilding we stay strictly to personal resources *concerning the project ahead.*

A method for teambuilding

There are many methods for teambuilding, and here is one.* It consists of a series of

* This particular method is inspired by Diana and John Lampen, the Hope project, GB.

rounds, taking place in a circle, without tables. It should be done calmly, with spacious time.

Some advice:

- ◆ Make sure that all wish to use the method
- ◆ And that all agree to the list of questions
- ◆ Use active listening and frank expression
- ◆ You can ask deepening questions, but avoid discussions
- ◆ The whole process takes place without interruptions and in strict rounds
- ◆ The participants could take turns starting the rounds, so that it is not the same person each time.

The rounds

1. Each person tells about his or her wishes and visions for the project
2. Subsequently about his or her worries about the project
3. Each person tells about his or her special contributions to the project
4. Each person tells about his or her limitations concerning the project
5. Each person tells each person in the team about his/her worries about this person's participation
6. Each person tells each person in the group about his/her appreciation of this person in connection with the project.
7. Evaluation round: Each person has the chance of telling of his/her feelings about what was said.
8. The group designs a plan for managing conflicts that could arise during the project.

FEEDBACK

The purpose of feedback is to give person who has produced a certain task a qualified and challenging response, and bring clarity to the questions the person has asked.

The term feedback can be understood as *giving something back* to the person. It is a human need to create and it is a human need to be appreciated. Appreciation can give the feeling of being taken seriously as part of the group, tribe or society. It also promotes the self-esteem of a person.

To have created something out of ones abilities often includes a feeling of having done one's best and therefore one is vulnerable. So the person who ask for feedback needs our time, full attention and the best of our respect.

So that leads to certain suggestions for feedback.

For the person who receives feedback:

- ◆ Be aware that feedback is not a discussion, you are asking for advice, so avoid defending attitude, and try to learn as much as you can.
- ◆ Be concrete about what you wish to have feedback on and why.
- ◆ Be concrete about what you want to communicate.
- ◆ Tell how you went about and if possible where you have your doubts.

For the person who give feedback

- ◆ The purpose is that the other person gets more clarity, so keep your own ideas in the background of your mind and listen openly
- ◆ If you are not familiar with the subject presented, you can put questions for understanding, but not too many!
- ◆ Tell what you liked
- ◆ Tell what was new to you

- ◆ Tell what was inspiring to you
- ◆ Ask questions:
 - 1) To understand the issue
 - 2) To deepen or elaborate the issue
- ◆ Now you can put forward critical questions
- ◆ Use active listening and interview technique and keep focus on the person, who wishes to understand and find new solutions
- ◆ Bring out your own suggestions if you have any, but don't take over the other persons problem

If you use these steps you have secured a good communication. The person whom you gave feedback will leave the situation more aware and inventive regarding his/her possibilities. Even though criticism was part of your feedback, the person is not let down or left with a feeling of being of no use he/she has found new ways and ideas for future actions.

This happened because you respected the person's need for creation and appreciation. It goes for all of us that when we have been told, on this thorough level, that we are capable to create and that we are part of the group, then it is much easier to listen to criticism.

If this is not the case then criticism is experienced as an attack and the first reaction is defence. When we defend ourselves we are not able to hear or learn anything new. Most of this takes place at an unconscious level, but it has a distinct influence on our communication and the clarity of the situation.

MEETINGS: PUNISHMENT OR PLEASURE ?

- *your choice!!*

SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER MEETINGS

More efficient – more productive – less boring – doing something together, not only talking – making use of everybody's ideas and resources – more friendly – shorter – more engaging – better decisions – no hidden agendas – giving energy, not draining

It is a sad fact that many people dislike meetings. They can be greenhouses for cultivating paralysing disharmony or productive harmony. They can create conflicts or solve them. Here are some ideas for better meetings.

The most important: That we choose our methods of meeting, in stead of letting old habits decide how we do

The convenor: You can take turns, it need not be the leader always – and two may share the job - the convenor is responsible for creating a good process and for the frames – active in collecting the views and suggesting conclusions – the participants respect the authority of the convenor.

Welcome round: How are you today? What is on your mind?

Agenda: Most important issues first – make it clear which issues are for *decision*, which are for *discussion*, and which are just an *exchange of ideas*.

More rounds, less polemic. Advantages: Less competition, less polarisation, more ideas, quick decision making.

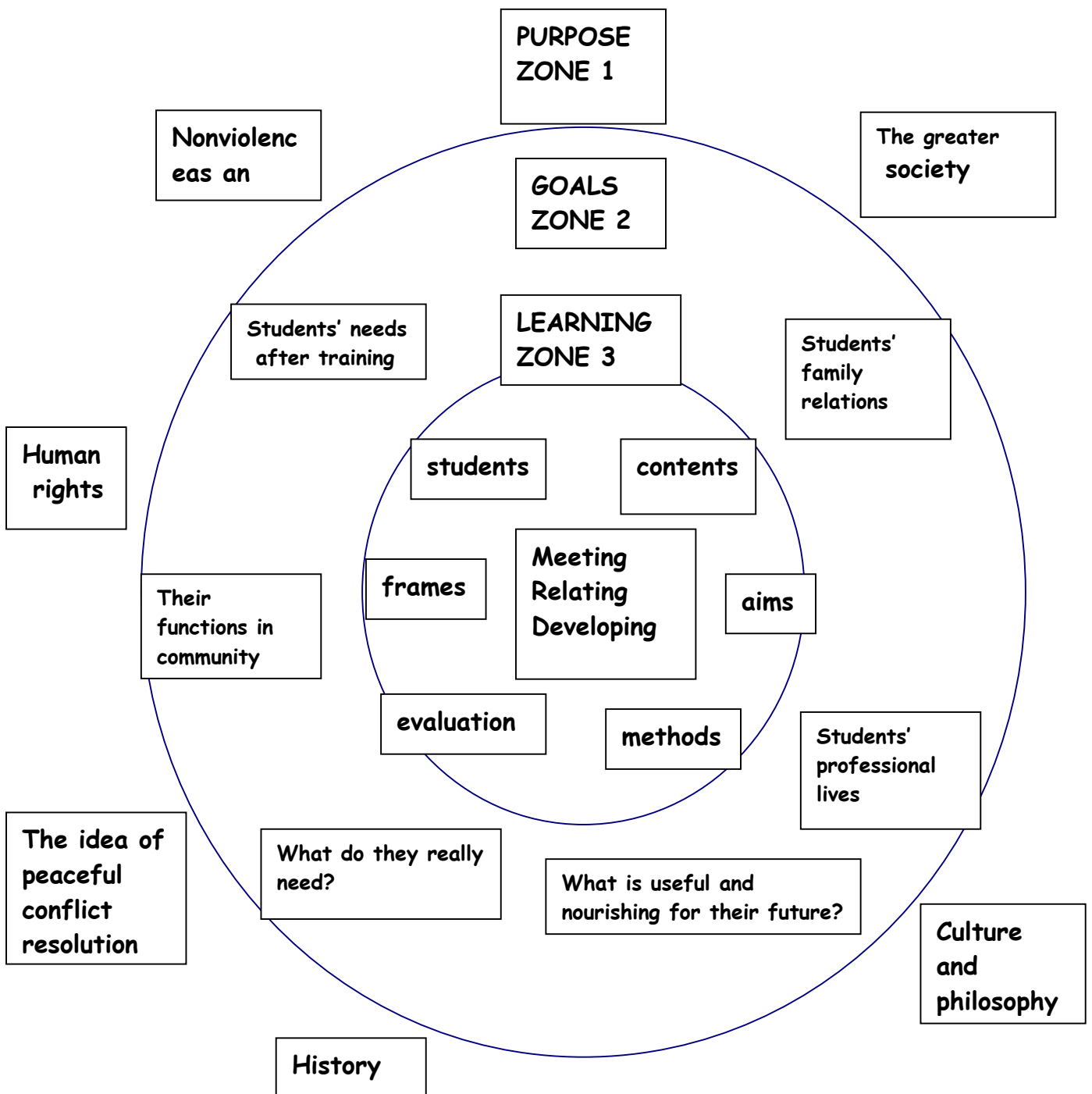
Open communication: be direct, say what you mean and mean what you say, no tricks, drop hidden alliances, speak for yourself, express observations, feelings, needs and requests, giving affirmation

Alternative approaches: Split up into smaller working groups for partition of work: you do this and we do that - breaks for reflection or fact finding – teambuilding – inspiration from outsiders – refreshment acts

Ground agreements: to speak briefly and to the point – no repetitions – it's OK to disagree – it's OK to change position – prepare before meeting – no interruptions – time management.

Evaluation after each meeting the convenors may guide an evaluation, in order to improve future meetings. How was the productivity and outcome of the meeting? And how was the atmosphere. Evaluations will make the participants feel more responsible, if their concerns and ideas are taken seriously.

**A DIDACTIC SKETCH
FOR PLANNING
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
WORKSHOPS**



DIDACTICS

- planning workshops with mindfulness

FINDING A MEANING

When we are going to give a workshop of conflict resolution there are so many things to consider, and it can be quite confusing, especially when we are not yet very experienced.

We would of course very much like to create a delightful and useful experience for the participants, and we also want to feel secure and calm while doing it.

There are some traps to fall into, when you are planning the event. One of them is too quickly to decide “oh they should learn active listening and escalation”. But why should they? Because **you** find it interesting? Or because you think they will enjoy it? Or because you feel safe with these tools? Or because you remember a good exercise to supply with? These reasons are not sufficient to create a meaningful experience for the people, who are giving their time to come to your workshop.

Another trap is to fill the workshop time with too many issues and presentations, because you find that all of it is important. Maybe you forget that all things take time, and conflict understanding takes a lot of time. Maybe you forget that if the students don't get the chance of digesting and personally work with the theories, then nothing is obtained. Except, perhaps, that the student are impressed and think “what a knowledgeable and eloquent trainer!” – but what did **they** learn that can make their lives more rich and complete?

DIDACTICS: WHAT IS IT?

Didactics simply means the action of planning educational events mindfully. It is to consider the wholeness of the learning situation, from your own motivation to small, practical issues.

The didactic sketch above is a tool, which may help you, when you wish to plan a meaningful workshop of conflict resolution.

The sketch is circular in order to show, that all its factors are inter-related, and none of them is the most important. They are all important. The sketch does not depict a permanent situation, but a reality that is constantly moving and changing. What happens in one of the circles will influence all the events in the other circles.

Let us start from within, from the inner core of the sketch.

THE PROCESS – ZONE 3

In the inner circle is the very process, - that which is developing during the workshop. This is a Zone 3 issue, because it is the area of learning. It is the space where we can prepare ourselves for handling conflicts in Zone 2 – the sphere where we meet other people in daily life.

The process is an encounter between the trainer and the students, and between the students of the group. It is the adventure of meeting each other, relating to each other and to the issues taught, and developing new experience, discoveries and tools, that can be used in real life.

There are so many things to consider for the process to flourish. In the sketch this multitude is arranged into 6 categories: the students, the aims, the contents, the methods, the frames and the evaluation. If you try to think of and discuss each of them it might help you to get better hold of your planning.

The students

Who are the people you are going to train? What are their needs? The more you know about them on beforehand, the more suitable approaches you can think of.

You can of course not know everything about them before the workshop, but some of it you can investigate by some appropriate processes at the beginning of the workshop. You can make rounds and interview-sessions, by which you can learn the students' wishes for the workshop.

Some things, which you will need to know before the planning of the workshop, are the age, the educational backgrounds and the general life situations of the students. This will help you to decide the level of complexity of the issues to work with. And it will help you to pick out issues and processes that give meaning to the students in their specific life functions and situations.

A first rule of thumb could be, never to underestimate their intelligence and never to overestimate their knowledge.

The motivation of the students is also useful to know. Did they join the workshop by their own free will, and because they wished to learn something, which could be important to their lives? In that case you would like to know more about what they have come for. They might also be forced to join the workshop, so that they have no choice. Maybe they are reluctant to the whole idea. If so it would be important to talk with the students about the reasons for their resistance. You may also think of some inspiring and enjoyable ways of making conflict resolution relevant to them, maybe games.

There are many other things to consider. Are the students as a group submissive and shy, because they are used to authoritarian classes, or are they strikingly outspoken and self-reliant? These two extremities will indeed demand very different methods to use.

The aims

The aims are the skills, knowledge and experiences, you want the workshop to lead to.

What should the students be able to understand after the workshop, and what should they be able

to practice in their lives? What ideas would you like them to reflect upon? These are some questions you can ask yourself in order to identify the aims of the workshop.

The more precisely and down-to earth you can state the aims when planning, the more easily you will develop your ideas for the process.

The aims you select are not permanent or untouchable. They will probably change quite a lot during the process. Maybe you have fixed the aims too high (that often happens), maybe too low. Maybe totally new necessities will show as you know the students better, and as they relax and tell what is on their minds.

If you have to change the aims on the way, it is just a sign of a living process. But the changes should be made deliberately, not randomly.

If you wish that the students take responsibility for their learning, you can openly tell them about the aims of the workshop and discuss their relevance with them. And whenever you change the aims, you could also make that clear to the students and let them have their say.

At the start you can make a contract with the students – an agreement about the function of the workshop: is it a training of skills, or are you asked to help solving a concrete conflict, they are having in their environment?

If the workshop changes character, from being training of skills to being group mediation – make sure you get acceptance from all participants.

The contents

When you have stated the aims and investigated the students' needs, you will have a firm ground to stand on, when you decide what contents to choose for the workshop.

The contents are *the issues of the workshop and the activities you plan for the students.*

What theories, concepts and skills would you like them to know? What would be useful for them to understand and to master?

At the beginning of our careers as trainers, we often fill too many issues and activities into the workshops. Later we find that it is less important how many issues we work with. Conflict resolution is a whole, like a plant with roots and leaves and flowers and fruits and seeds. Where you start is not so important. What really matters is how deeply the students are able to experience and understand the basics.

If for instance the students work with “Three ways of meeting conflicts” they may not only listen to a presentation. They may also have mutual conversations about these conflict patterns and compare them to the ways, in which they are acting in their everyday. They might share personal experiences in small groups. They might also do role-plays, in which they experience here-and-now how it feels to fly, to fight and to open to the conflict. Maybe they will have a very deep and open dialogue in plenary and they may discover that the problems they meet in their lives are not so different from the problems that other people meet. Then the loneliness disappears and it is easier to learn.

Maybe they will also discover that they are imprisoning themselves by certain approaches they use, and that they can liberate a lot of energy by trying more opening strategies. They may by themselves find their way into the basics of true dialogue: to express oneself frankly and to listen attentively to others. They will then wish to dive more deeply into the questions of causes and conditions of conflicts, and ways to transform them. They will investigate and try out the language of conflicts and examine the opening and blocking ways of communicating.

Sometimes it happens that a workshop of several days unfolds from one single or a few items. Sometimes you work with a variety of issues, which you link together. It is really not needed to fill the agenda with too many issues – the important thing is that the students

really experience, work with and reflect on the basic ideas and tools of conflict resolution.

The contents and students’ activities are closely linked to the aims. If you wish the students to be able to reflect on the nature of conflict, then you should give them time to reflect. If you wish them to be able to practice nonviolent communication, then they should have the chance to practice during workshop. If you wish them to improve their ways of dialogue, they should here-and-now have the experience of how a dialogue can work. If you wish them to know how a destructive conflict builds up, then you could tell them about it, and let them compare to their own life experiences.

The presentations you choose to give are important. They can give structure, clarity and new perspectives to the students’ way of thinking and experiencing their life situations. Try to make your presentations fairly short, precise, lively and with down-to-earth examples.

The methods

The methods are *the actions you as a trainer take to support the learning process of the students.*

When you choose your methods of teaching, you will consider the aims of the workshop, its contents and indeed the students’ background.

The basic question to put before you choose your methods is: how can the students become active in the learning process, not only with their brains but also with their feelings and their needs, daring to connect the new ideas with the truths of their daily existence?

Teaching and training conflict resolution is much more than providing people with new ideas and skills. It is the start of a journey with new, difficult and rewarding discoveries, which the trainer can help to launch and

support. In that process it is vital to respect every single student' right to privacy.

Action, reflection, learning and strategy - a real life method.

Action is the presentation or the exercise with which the trainer opens a new subject.

This being done, you will need plans for how to make the students **reflect** on what they have heard or experienced. What relevance did it have to them? What questions, feelings and thoughts came to their minds?

And then: What **learning** can they extract? What can be of use to them in their daily situations?

As for **strategy**: *How* do they wish to make use of it? *How* can it improve their future meetings with the conflicts of life?

Some other questions are:

- ❖ How will you support the *social interaction* in the group? We know that the more the students feel at ease, the more they will learn. They can also learn a lot from each other, if the group feeling is safe and open.
- ❖ When will you use *experimental learning* (experience before theory) and when will you use the more *traditional teaching* with presentations followed by exercises and other experiences?
- ❖ How will you arrange the balance between *bodywork* and *mindwork*? This has to do with the rhythm of the workshop and with retaining and refreshing the energy of the students.

The answers to those questions may depend on which methods you feel safe with, and which methods the students feel safe with. But sometimes we have to go beyond safety in order to grow. Sometimes

the learning gains when the trainer challenges himself or herself, and when the students' habits are challenged.

The frames

The frames are the resources available for the workshop like time, materials, venue, possibilities of excursions etc. If these resources are satisfactory and well arranged, it will benefit the workshop.

Nevertheless another resource is more crucial, namely the qualities of the resource persons, the trainers:

- ❖ How well have you prepared the issues and methods of the workshop?
- ❖ If you are a team, how well have you prepared your co-operation? Have you done teambuilding?
- ❖ What are your strong points and what are your limitations? What are your special contributions? What are your visions for the workshop and what are your concerns?

Maybe the most important resource is your motivation. Often when we take action, we have several motivations, and that is only natural. We may find it exciting to teach conflict resolution. We may find our salary important. We may enjoy the special contact we can have with our students. We may love to organise. All this is totally legal. Nevertheless it is vital for the quality of our workshops that our root motivation is to help enriching the minds and the daily lives of the students. When that simple motivation is present it really makes the task so much easier, and it makes us much more clear about what we have to do. Our communication becomes more authentic.

The evaluation

You would of course like to know what your students gained from the workshop – how useful were the issues to them? And you would also like to know how the students feel about the process. Are they safe and comfortable, are they enjoying, do they find the workshop meaningful, are they bored?

Sometimes you may have your own notions about all this; you can maybe perceive how the students are thinking and feeling. But often a trainer is not quite sure about how the process is working. Those who really know it, are the students. So you can just simply ask them. You can do evaluations during the workshop.

This means to make many small evaluations during the process, maybe after each major activity. At the beginning the students may be very silent and polite. But they will quickly get used to be more outspoken and frank, if you really wish for it and ask for it.

This will be helpful for the students learning process, for one of the cores of conflict resolution is to be able to speak about your experiences and feelings, and listen to other people's stories. It will also be helpful for the trainer, because you will be on a more solid ground when you know – and not merely guess – what is on the minds of the students. Then you will know how to continue and maybe improve your methods, while the workshop is going on.

The evaluation you make the student do after a workshop is also needed. But why is it needed? What is the use of it?

There are several reasons for doing evaluations at the end of the workshop.

The trainer wishes to know what activities and issues were useful and workable for the students, and which were less valuable, in order to develop and improve future workshops.

- The trainer wishes to know “how was I doing? We are sometimes worried about our performances, and indeed we all need acknowledgement and feedback. That is a very human need and not to be judged as “egotistic”.
- Evaluations may also be useful for the students. Firstly it is their democratic

right to express their views on what they have been spending time on. Secondly some well-put evaluation questions can make them identify and summarise what they have experienced and learned, and it can make them reflect: how will I use this in my personal and professional life?

There are so many methods of evaluations, and it is important that you make it clear for yourself, what you wish to obtain by the evaluations, you plan to do.

THE GOALS – ZONE 2

In the middle circle we find the general goals of the workshop. Why are we doing it? Who are to benefit from it? How can they benefit? How can they use the outcome of the workshop in their lives?

This is a Zone 2 issue, because it refers to the area where the students in their families and local communities have to deal with conflicts and hopefully manage them in more developing ways.

So what are the present and future functions of your students, in their personal and professional spheres of life? When you know these functions you will also be able to know the goals of the workshop.

For instance: some students are attending school, others may be teaching at schools, so their needs for skills and knowledge will be different. Some are living as members of a settlement, others are leaders of the settlement, and they will need different outcomes. Some are children of a family - others are parents. Some are employees, some are employers. Some are working in NGOs, some are living in monasteries. They all have different life situations.

So finding the goals means to identify the activities of the students in Zone 2. What are the concrete challenges they meet in

real life? What kind of conflicts do they have to deal with?

The more you consider the goals of the students, the more meaningful and useful will the workshop be for them.

THE PURPOSE – ZONE 1

In the outer circle we find the overall purpose of working with conflict resolution. This is much more than the goals of the single workshop. It is to find the meaning of promoting peaceful conflict management. Why do you use your time and energy to do this? What is so important about it? Why do you want other people to know about it and to be able to practice it?

The more you have reflected on these philosophical and social questions, the more secure you will feel, when you do the planning and when you are in the middle of a workshop. For your actions may then be carried by a firm sense of conviction and meaning.

In the Western countries, where many ideals and cultural patterns are scattered, these overall questions are difficult – but not impossible - to answer. In the case of the Tibetan society in exile the answers seem to be more obvious.

The meaning of conflict resolution is closely linked to the idea of nonviolence - to stand up for your truth and justice in ways that do not harm others and at the same time are efficient. This idea is in fact inscribed in the Charter of the Tibetan Community in exile. So when you work for conflict resolution you are in accordance with the principles of your society. This is not the case for all nations, for instance not for very militaristic and oppressive societies.

But the fact that the Tibetan society is generally dedicated to peaceful conflict resolution does not mean that it

automatically permeates all levels of the community. The same goes for the widely accepted ideal of compassion in Buddhist thinking. These values may clash with the pursuit for power and wealth, which is a reality in all societies, and which Buddhists name ignorance, greed and hatred. One of your aims might be to make the everyday practice of conflict resolution spread into all sectors of your community.

The history and future hopes of a society are also closely linked to the purpose of conflict resolution. In the Tibetan case the history and the future hopes are very visible. The links from conflict management to the future hopes are also clear, as many of you have explained: the more we stand united the more energy we will have to make our cause prevail.

Globally though, we have to go beyond the idea of the nation to find the deep reasons to work for conflict resolution.

All these thoughts may seem rather far from the down-to-earth job of doing a decent workshop. But for the trainer it may be wise to reflect on the great issues of society and philosophy. You will sometimes meet them in questions from your students. And you will meet them as questions from yourself, because we all need to sense the deeper meaning to our doings.