

Olga Consegre

Professor Pack

Exploring Multicultural Studies

April 2 2023

Conflict resolution

Communication is more than just speaking and listening between two parties. The essence of communication is entailed in the assigned meaning to what is being communicated, verbally or nonverbally. Conflict can arise when one party interprets words or body language of the other party differently than intended. Effective interpersonal communication does not come naturally, it is a skill that needs to be developed through training. In this essay some values and strategies for conflict resolution are discussed and illustrated with a personal example.

Communication does not come naturally to us (Koppelman 44), it is a skill that is taught by our parents, immediate family, teachers, mentors, etc. Oftentimes, we simply adopt a communication style that we grew up with, and this might not be the most effective one. In addition, each one of us has a personal bias and lens through which we interpret the world. All of these are factors that can lead to conflict in our communication. There are also many other subtleties in the psychological realm which can contribute to conflict. When we try to resolve conflict through conversation, our selective views of the world and feelings often get in the way, and we jump to judgements and conclusions before hearing out and trying to understand the other person. Our body language can even make things worse.

I had a communication “breakdown” with my husband about a week ago. My husband recently got his motorcycle license wanted to buy a motorcycle. He saw one online that he was excited about, and the owner accepted his offer. He came to talk to me on how to make arrangement to get the bike. I made some suggestions to him, and that’s where our communication broke down. He did not like one of my suggestions and asked me why I

would compare him with one of my friends. It got so out of hand that he missed out on the opportunity to get a good deal. Now a week later, this conflict has been put to rest. My husband realized that his reaction was mainly based on his interpretation of my words and not the meaning that I wanted to convey. I also realized that I was not sensitive to the solution he was proposing. After reading about conflict resolution in *Understanding Human Differences* (Koppelman), it is obvious that in this conflict, the values and strategies listed in the book could have been very helpful. My husband did not see that I was criticizing his idea, I was not criticizing him personally. On the other hand, I did not really position myself in his shoes and neglected the principle of reciprocity. As in most conflicts, our egos got in the way too and therefore we violated the principles of fallibility and equality as well. I encouraged my husband to also read the section on conflict resolution in the book, so we are both more consciously aware on how to avoid conflict. The values for conflict resolution namely, Fallibility, Equality, Reciprocity, and Nonviolence, can be easily memorized by forming the mnemonic FERN. The strategies can be summarized as: Rationality, Criticize the Idea not the person, involve All parties, restate ideas to verify Intended Meanings, and Collaborate.

Effective interpersonal communication is key to the quality of our daily lives. Awareness of our personal biases and feelings and knowledge of the values and strategies of interpersonal conflict resolution can help us to live peacefully with the people in our lives.

Works Cited

Koppelman, Kent L. "Understanding Human Differences." *Multicultural Education for a Diverse America*, 5th Ed. Pearson (2017).