

Building Relationships: Developing healthy relationships, communication skills and conflict resolution

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Abstract

Building of relationships is the very essence of a civilized society. Without any mutual relationship, mutual concern for each other, a healthy society cannot exist. The word 'relationship' is a derivative of the word "Relative"; therefore, one has to understand that creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, faith, respect, likes, dislikes and sharing each other's joys and sorrows are of paramount importance for the development, sustenance and flourishing of an effective relationship. The issue of creating healthy relations is a sensitive issue and any wrong step in the direction by any action or wrong utterance/communication can prove damaging. The present paper talks on how effective communication skills are helpful where one is treading in unknown territories because a skillful communicator can easily decide about the technique to be used in specific situations or with specific people.

Keywords: sentiments, communication skills, conflict resolution, deformity, empathy, resilience.

Introduction:

Since the onset of civilization, building of relationships is very essential for the existence of a society. It means developing connections with people around us. It involves understanding each other's emotions, sentiments, values. These relations develop and flourish through mutual trust, faith, respect, likes, dislikes and by sharing each other's joys and sorrows, etc., because it has to be understood that 'relation or relationship' is a derivative of the word 'relative', which has its origin in late 14th century from French word "relative" and the Latin word "relativus". It means "carried back" or "borne back". It can be interpreted as faith, trust or concern for each other on relative basis; the word 'mutual' explains it in a better way. Thus, the issue of creating healthy relations and thereby developing confidence-building measures wherever required is a sensitive issue and any wrong step in the direction by way of any action or wrong communication can prove damaging. This being so, there is an absolute need to develop effective communication skills, because with the support of healthy communication skills alone one can convey one's feelings and intentions, express concerns and understand and value each other's feelings and requirements. However, before adopting the various methods for

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developing communication skills, one has to ascertain and identify the population, the person or group of persons with whom the communication has to be established, assess their needs and requirements and accordingly communicate in a healthy way befitting the occasion. Different communication skills may have to be developed and used for different people, because the methodology to be adopted, except for a few basics, cannot be identical for everyone.

Review

From the origin of the Universe to its present-day existence, we all are bound to one or the other form of communication, whether it's the chirping of birds, humming of the honey bee, cooing of the babies, roaring of the lions and what not. And this communication is actually what keeps us all going, be it our personal relations or professional relations. It won't be an exaggeration if we say that good communication actually results in building of lifelong healthy relationships. The importance of communication skills and conflict resolution has gained importance in the present-day scenario as a result of the fast pace of life across the globe. The importance, significance and relevance of communication is now considered to be critically essential for growing individually and in relation to others [1]. Healthy relationships (HR) education has been widely adopted as an alternative or complement to dating abuse prevention education among youth and young adults [2]. Studies show that effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering healthy and productive relationships, whether we talk about it from personal or professional points of view [3]. Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful interactions in various aspects of life, ranging from personal relationships to professional environments. It encompasses both verbal and nonverbal communication techniques, each playing a vital role in conveying messages, building relationships, and ensuring mutual understanding [4]. The essential communication skills are critical for achieving success in both personal and professional realms. Effective communication fosters strong relationships, enhances teamwork, and drives career advancement [5].

As per a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 77% of employers prioritize communication skills when hiring candidates. Research indicates that companies with effective communication practices are 50% more likely to experience lower employee turnover. Also, the Gottman Institute found that effective communication can improve the quality of personal relationships by up to 35% [6]. When we say effective communication, it does not mean only what is conveyed, but also how it is conveyed [7]. And when we say how it is conveyed, we target the communication skills of the person. It is said that effective communication is a natural propensity [8]. Good communication is generally considered to be an effective and most promising catalyst for acquiring what we actually want in our personal and professional lives. Communication is our daily requirement to express our point of view, whether verbal or non-verbal. As said, it's a lifetime process that starts in the womb and lasts till death [9]. Neither individuals nor organizations can live without strong communication skills [10]. Communication is a fundamental process in interpersonal interaction that allows the exchange of information, ideas and emotions [11]. The communication skills develop the capability of understanding others and equally afford an opportunity to others to understand the capacity, capability of the communicator. A good

communicator, therefore, is one who remains focused, uses clear and concise language to avoid any misunderstanding, has a befitting nonverbal cue such as a good body language, facial expressions, and tone of the voice and maintains eye-to-eye contact as these help in conveying the emotions in communication. Healthy interpersonal relationships require honest, open and empathetic communication. In personal relationships, for example, couples who are able to communicate effectively are more likely to face common challenges, resolve conflicts in a constructive way and strengthen their emotional bonds [3]. The same is true in professional contexts, where effective communication between colleagues or between teams is a key factor in achieving common goals and increasing productivity [12].

Many researchers have concluded that communication is a crucial skill, especially for employers who require universities to develop students' communication skills to meet their requirements in the workplace [13]. As far as professional relationships are considered, a lot of research has focused on managers' perceptions of graduate attributes as well as the importance and means of developing communication skills, whereas few studies have paid attention to graduates' perspectives [14] and in particular Chinese graduates' perspectives. Most of the companies insist that universities should develop students' soft skills since disciplinary knowledge is not sufficient for a successful career [15]. One thing that needs to be addressed in communication skills is consistency. Studies have shown that consistency in communication impacts the structural integrity of interpersonal relationships, both personal and professional. Consistency offers a bundle of benefits. It fosters trust, breeds confidence and security [16]. Thus, while dealing with people across the globe, whether in personal relationships or professional relationships, we need to be good communicators. We need to consistently adopt methodologies for healthy communication. Researchers have identified soft skills as important parameters for workplaces. Results indicate that communication skills should not be seen as decontextualized communication behaviours. Instead, communication skills require constant manoeuvring and alignment of communication behaviour that people show while practicing the same [17].

Discussions

Developing good communication skills

A good communicator has to be above all a good, active and sympathetic listener too. Many people at times develop negative thinking, attributing their shortcomings to luck or divine curse. It is for helping them to regain their levels of confidence, to cope effectively with the challenges bravely and effectively; confidence-building measures need to be initiated, taking into account the physical and the psychological conditions of each person or group of persons. The course of action to be adopted for creating a healthy relationship in such cases will vary from person to person. The methodologies to be adopted would be different for people under depression because of personal relationships rather than people who need counselling for professional relationships. These details clearly point out that communication skills to be developed may not be complete unless and until we specify the circumstances, the situations and the persons for whom they are being used. Thus, each case will require a different approach and communication skills to enable the speaker to infuse confidence and capacity building measures in the concerned persons. One can improve upon one's communicative skills and

strategies by practicing regularly, by listening to good communicators, by reviewing feedback obtained on one's performance. One has to be patient as it takes time to learn and master anything new, to understand the psychological needs and communicate accordingly with confidence. It has been seen that people with sound minds and good physiques are usually of good nature and capable of creating an atmosphere of joy and mirth which helps them to create healthy relationships. Once the communication skills are in place, a mutual trust is created, an atmosphere of interdependence and concern for each other starts developing, which in turn prepares a solid ground essentially required for such building of resilient minds and recommending capacity building programmes which as stated above may vary from person to person. This will then also help in resolving any conflict that may arise inadvertently during the running of such programmes. Since the issue of creating healthy relations and developing confidence-building measures is a sensitive issue, any wrong or any miscalculated step in the direction can prove damaging instead of solving the issue. Besides, the essential requirements as discussed above are not an end in themselves. The basic knowledge of human psychology as also of human physiology/anatomy is an added requirement which can also help a communicator in understanding the problems on scientific lines and also as per the requirements of human psychology. This will help a communicator to develop necessary communication skills equipped with scientific approach, psychological support and as per the needs of a person or group of persons. The training thus imparted to the affected person/persons will help them in developing good mental health to cope effectively with challenges so that the same challenges never recur and cow them down (person or group of persons) again, develop overall positivity both in participants as also in the trainers (communicators). In some cases of physical deformities even simple yoga under the supervision of a yoga instructor may be of some help, but it may need consultations with medical/psychiatric experts for specific cases. Likewise, for increasing mental peace and developing power to cope effectively with the stress, guided lessons in meditation can be arranged and introduced to the needy person(s).

Conflict resolution

The word "conflict" derives its origin from the Latin dictionary word "conflictus", which means a "striking together" or "a clash". The word entered the English dictionary in the early 15th century [18]. In a healthy relationship, the rise of 'conflicts' is a normal thing, as two people cannot be expected always to agree on the same thing. The difference of opinion in fact reveals the maturity of individual minds. The words conflict and relationship go hand in hand in their very origin. So it won't be wrong to say that conflicts are an inseparable part of a healthy relationship and as such it is essential to learn how to deal with them and resolve the same in a satisfying manner in time before it develops into a threat to relationship. Research shows that worldwide the mankind is operating in very complex and challenging environments owing to kaleidoscopic issues like climatic changes, conflicts in relations, poverty, unemployment, migration, which are just a few to be mentioned. Of all these, conflict has captivated attention most, as it permeates every facet of human society [19]. Before resolving the conflicts, one needs to first understand the conflict, then manage it and finally resolve it. Before resolution, the conflict needs to be managed. The term conflict management is often mistaken for conflict resolution; however, both have their own individual spaces. "Conflict Management is often defined as the process of changing the negative emotional states in a

conflict to emotional states that allows working out a resolution to the conflict” [20]. The conflict resolution needs an in-depth study of the reasons behind it and the situation arising out of it. The conflict may sometimes arise owing to misinterpretation of some statements, or unintentional quotation by any person, or alternatively, it may be due to some reference, or statement made by anyone on some sensitive issue resulting in hurting the feelings of either of the parties. Besides, since conflicts may not always be of the same nature/type, these may as such require different *modus operandi* to be adopted for their resolution. Conflict resolution appears as a critical factor that influences the maintenance of healthy relationships, with strategies such as emotional regulation and open communication proving effective. Work-life balance, supported by prioritization and mutual support, significantly influences relational satisfaction. Nonverbal communication and quality time were also identified as essential components in nurturing relationship dynamics [21].

Conclusions

For building resilient minds to enable a person/group of persons to cope effectively with the mental stress or lack of confidence due to his/her poor communication skills, the methodology to be embraced can be summarized as follows:

- Selection of communicators who are self-confident, physically fit, mentally alert and always positive.
- The communicators need to be acquainted with the basic knowledge of human psychology and physiology so as to be alive to the problems being faced by a person or group of persons with whom they have to communicate effectively and create not only a healthy relation, but also a mutual trust and interdependence.
- The communicators may, whenever felt necessary, be given a training programme of short duration depending upon the requirements.
- A feedback needs to be obtained from the trainees (person/persons) about the methodology adopted by a trainer, so that any shortcoming is set right.
- Additions to the list can be made only by practically watching the situation and its results; hence the list cannot be exhaustive.
- Whatever the cause may be, the timely and amicable resolution of the conflict by adopting different measures worked out on the basis of in-depth study of the situation is essential for continuity of a healthy and dependable relationship.

The people who can be helpful for the creation of healthy relationships in all such cases have to be physically fit, mentally agile and full of faith in themselves. It is said a physically fit body has a sound mind and a sound mind alone is competent to think positively and take proper decisions in adversity. Such people are always confident of themselves and they usually face a problem or problems or an adverse situation head-on, bravely, confidently and effectively. They are always happy, aware of their surroundings which they usually manage to keep happy by their positive vibes. They are the people who cause happiness wherever they go, are

successful in their lives by controlling the adverse situations effectively. All these qualities make them good communicators.

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