



Dealing with Conflict



Manda Patel

Director, Global Retreat Centre, Oxfordshire

We live in a world where conflict is now the norm. Why is that?

I think that we've lost our inner strength and the ability to exercise what we understand to be right and true. We know that fighting doesn't get us anywhere and quarrelling doesn't get us what we want - it just creates a lot of negative energy - but we just can't help ourselves. What we need to do is develop our own internal strength, recognise our own value, recognise the value of other people and accept and understand the diversity in our world.

Is there a connection between inner conflict and conflict with others?

Everything begins with ourselves. If I'm fighting with other people, I'm battling with something inside myself. Perhaps I'm not able to put into practice something I believe in or

am having to compromise my values. This battling makes me lose my inner strength and value. When I'm unhappy with myself, it comes out in my interaction with others. When a group of people are unhappy, it comes out on a bigger scale. The more understanding and peaceful we become, the more accepting and loving we become, and we reflect that in our relationships.

“ To be quiet doesn't mean to run away; it means to evaluate my thoughts and feelings before I express them. ”

To stay quiet and withdraw in a situation of conflict might be seen as weakness. Can spirituality be a strength?

We cannot gain internal strength without spirituality. By spirituality I mean recognising that I am more than just this physical appearance. My strength lies in my awareness of myself as a spiritual being – a living, thinking being, the essence of peace, of love and happiness. The more I experience this, the more I experience strength inside myself. To be quiet doesn't mean to run away; it means to evaluate my thoughts and feelings *before* I express them.

What if you know you're right? How do you achieve what you want whilst keeping your spiritual awareness?

The most important thing is patience. This is something I've really had to work on. I might be right but I have to wait for that moment when everybody else agrees. That way I also let people learn their own lessons. Maybe from where I am it's possible to see quickly how things will happen, but others have to get to that place before they can see it. I have to learn to accept that what is right will eventually become apparent and exercise my own patience.

We may recognise the need to change but how do we do it?

We eat to survive but if I want to survive mentally in a happy state, I have to feed myself with silence, positive thoughts, the qualities that I have inside me. I have to be conscious of these every day, as many times as I can, and so build up my inner strength.

For information about Overcoming Anger courses in the UK:

www.bkwsu.org/uk/whatwedo/courses

Global Retreat Centre:

www.globalretreatcentre.org

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Values: the Unifying Factor

Ambassador Ragnar Ångeby

I use meditation to give me strength and a clear mind. It helps me to stay in balance and not let ego interfere in my work. Whether you're a peacemaker, mediator or whatever - you are a human being, a spiritual being, and must act as such.

Most people find the practice of self-reflection and reflection on personal values very useful and valuable. President Carter told me that when he was negotiating with Begin and Sadat, the Israeli and Egyptian leaders, it was only when they began talking human values that they started to get results. They started to talk about themselves not as leaders of nations but as human beings in human conflict. Distancing themselves from their daily lives enabled them to open up and understand that they needed to do things differently.

I've seen this with the Russians and Chechens, who are normally extremely hostile to each other. When we met in a place close to nature - which always helps - and started to talk about what was human in each one, they became less aggressive. Once, they finished by singing together on the common themes

of love and death. On these they could understand each other. I often use three values as a way of unifying: respect, honesty and compassion. Whatever your background, everyone understands these. They are the essence of a human being.

Any change in action requires a change in thinking, which takes time. You have to listen and reflect on what you hear. Listening is perhaps the most difficult principle. You have to learn another way of doing things and then change your actions. If you try and rush things, you destroy the process. Time allows us to reflect.

Listening enables both parties to see where they are different and where the same. You have to see yourself from the outside and

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Photo: Angel Vidal

see if you look the same from different perspectives.

I've been using meditation since 1995, when I came across the Brahma Kumaris. Before I do something important, I always take 5 or 10 minutes to meditate. To take time for meditation actually saves time because you are much fresher in your mind and can be much more focused - and the results are usually better.

Ambassador Ragnar Ångeby is Head of the Conflict Prevention in Practice Program at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden
www.folkebernadotteacademy.se/en

The Spirit of Social Work

Since 1998 over 150 social work managers and 500 social work staff from the public, private and voluntary sectors have attended retreats at the Global Retreat Centre in Oxfordshire.

The retreats give the participants an opportunity to develop their effectiveness as professional helpers, giving them time out in a beautiful, peaceful setting to relax and recharge, reflect on their qualities and strengths and experience the benefits of meditation.

“The main thing people gain from the retreats is a sense of being in touch with a world where they are not under pressure to deliver but where they can sit back and think about what it's really meant to be about. By getting



Social work managers explore Spiritual Intelligence at Work with author and trainer Mike George at the Global Retreat Centre in September 2009.

in touch with their positive values and seeing things from a wider perspective they have an opportunity to re-assess where they are at and re-connect with those core values which brought them into social work in the first place.”

Malcolm Mackenzie, Former Children and Family Services Manager

“Being out there as a manager in social work can be very testing and lonely. We aren't just social workers; we are family members and parents, too. I've seen people really turn around in that weekend. People have arrived shattered and gone away in one piece and taken away with them the knowledge that

they can do that. They begin the process of reaching to the point deep down inside of them where all is calm.”

John Turner, Trainer, Executive Coach and Former Social Worker

Retreat for Social Workers:
11-13 June: *The Kindness Factor*

Retreat for Social Work Managers:
17-19 September: *Putting the Heart Back into Social Work*

To find out more: Tel. **020 8727 3358**
www.bkwsu.org/uk/community-outreach/social-work



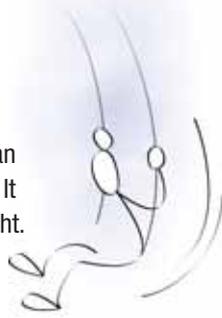
Over 70 people from the Sheffield-based Zimbabwean Friday Apostles' Church visiting Global Co-operation House, the Brahma Kumaris' national co-ordinating office in North West London, in February 2010 for a day entitled *Experiencing God's Love through the Power of Silence*.

The A-Z of Spiritual Living

H is for Happiness

Happiness is such nourishment that it can transform a person from weak into powerful. It makes difficult things easy and heavy things light.

From *A Pocket Book on Virtue* by Dadi Janki, available from www.bkpublications.com



RECIPE: Falafel-type Burgers

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3-4 fresh green chillies or 1 green pepper
- 2 carrots, finely shredded
- 2 cups soya mince, dry
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 cup chickpeas, soaked overnight and blended to a smooth paste
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp asafoetida (optional)
- 2 tbsp plain flour (or oat or chickpea flour)
- 3 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped finely
- 3-4 tbsp sunflower oil

1. Heat olive oil in a pan on medium to high heat and add the finely chopped chillies or pepper. Sauté for a couple of minutes.
2. Add shredded carrots and sauté for a few more minutes. Reduce the heat to low, add the dry soya mince and mix.
3. Add ½ cup hot water, cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow to cool.
4. In a bowl mix together the cooled soya mince and the chick pea paste. Add salt, black pepper, oregano, cumin, asafoetida, flour and parsley, and form a stiff paste.
5. Shape into narrow flat burgers and shallow fry in the sunflower oil.
6. Put the burgers on a paper towel to remove the excess oil. Serve hot or warm.

From *Pure & Simple – Cooking for a Busy Lifestyle*, available from www.bkpublications.com

Silence

In the room of my mind
 I enclose my thoughts, resting
 In stillness.
 The functioning body begins to ease.
 My breathing becomes slower,
 My senses relax,
 And the inner body feels cool and peaceful.
 As thoughts lie slumbering
 In their bed of peace
 No words come tumbling.
 The mind is still
 And energy is preserved.
 In this centre I feel fullness,
 A binding,
 A realignment, of the soul's discordant parts
 Within the inner recesses of the inner soul
 A power grows,
 An energy
 Of purest consciousness,
 Which flows,
 Like a silver stream of silent sound,
 Echoing,
 Sounding,
 Filling,
 Taking the soul
 Into the silence of being complete.

From *In the Stillness: Meditations to Read* available from www.bkpublications.com

