



## "Fair Play in Conflicts: The Role of Empathy and Analysis"

I recently encountered a conflict between two individuals, both familiar to me, at the airport while awaiting my luggage. Each person was blaming the other for a mistake, making it challenging for an outsider to take sides, as both perspectives seemed valid. After collecting my luggage and returning home, the incident lingered in my mind.

Upon arriving home, I found myself reflecting on the airport situation, wondering if I should have intervened and, if so, whose side to take. Curious about my daughter Genz's perspective, I posed various scenarios to her, urging her to imagine herself in each and determine her course of action.

Scenario 1: "Suppose your mother has an argument with a stranger, whom would you support?"

Her Answer: "Definitely I would support my mom because I know she is always right and she is my mother." Her face lit up as she spoke these words.

Scenario 2: "Suppose your mother has an argument with a family friend, whom would you support?"

Her Answer: "Again I would support my mom because I know my mom very well."

Scenario 3: "Suppose your mother has an argument with your sister, whom would you support?"

Her Answer: After some thought, she responded, "Since you are elder, I will support you, Mom."

I probed further, "Suppose you feel I am wrong and your sister is right, still will you support me?"

Answer: "I will choose to keep quiet because you are elder."

Scenario 4: "Suppose your mother has an argument with your father, whom would you support? You are expected to answer and not remain silent."

There was a long silence. I could understand that it was difficult for her to take sides. Finally, she came up with her answer "Mom, I think I will listen to both sides, give a suggestion with respect to both, and try to find a solution."

While content with her answer, I couldn't help but question, "Then child, why didn't you do the same for scenarios 1, 2, and 3? Just because I am your mother, can you take a side without analyzing the facts? Is it the right action?"

There was a moment of silence, and she acknowledged that she should not have taken my side solely because I am her mother. Instead, in every scenario, she must analyze and take the correct stand.

In a world filled with conflicts, individuals often choose sides hastily, influenced by factors such as proximity, fame, power, position, popularity, and financial ties. Let us take a pause, introspect, and question whether our opinions are well-founded. Have we listened to both sides, given others a fair chance to speak before passing judgment, considered their perspective, and exhibited empathy?

In conclusion, the scenarios presented to my child and her subsequent reflections offer a valuable lesson in conflict management. The tendency to take sides hastily, influenced by personal biases or relationships, may cloud our judgment. Instead, we must strive to approach conflicts with objectivity, listening to all perspectives and considering each party's viewpoint. It is a reminder to introspect and cultivate empathy, ensuring that our opinions are grounded in fairness and open-mindedness. As we navigate the complex landscape of human interactions, let us be mindful of our responses, fostering an environment where conflicts are resolved through understanding and thoughtful consideration. It is better to remain silent rather than take wrong sides.

"Before planting your flag in a debate, take a moment to till the soil of understanding. Only then can the seeds of resolution grow."

Dr Gayatri Narasimhan

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