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The Importance of Mindfulness in Conflict Resolution

Researchers in various disciplines acknowledge the inevitability of conflict and examine the principle of interdependency for resolution. Ray Parchelo¹ defines conflict as part of the individual's process of self-fulfillment. Each party has an identifiable position, interest and view. Conflict resolution is a way of seeing the connection between people and then melting and reducing, or resolving, those differences. The process begins with the parties turning to their shared needs and purpose, but there is no magic formula that resolves all disputes.

Bee Chen Goh² emphasizes the importance of effective communication. The listener may perceive a message differently, or even in the opposite way than the speaker intends, so both parties must use clear words to eliminate misunderstandings and participate fully. Else Hammerich³ explains that conflict may lead to new insights as parties engage in dialog, listen carefully, and acknowledge common needs. Conflict resolution is about self-respect and standing up for one's values using non-violent means; it is not about giving in or submitting. Goh concurs with a reminder that peace is not the absence of conflict but the recognition that the way to solve conflict is through nonviolent participation.

Recognition of interdependency helps parties think beyond their own particular interests. As each party moves from self-concerns to an understanding of the concerns of the other, the opportunity for mutually satisfactory resolution is increased. Mindfulness is a concept that can be applied in all situations.

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1. Ray Parchelo, "A Mind to Fight," paper to the North American Conference on Spirituality and Social Work, Ontario, Canada, June 2008, pages 4-5; http://www.stu.ca/~spirituality/documents/RayParchelo-AMindtoFight_001.pdf
 2. Bee Chen Goh, "Ideas of Peace and Cross-Cultural Dispute Resolution," *Bond Law Review*, Volume 17, Issue 1, Article 3 (2005), Bond University, Robina, Australia, page 51; <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/blr/vol17/iss1/3>
 3. Else Hammerich, Meeting Conflicts Mindfully, Trainers' Training, Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution, Copenhagen, Denmark, November 2000 – May 2001, page 9; www.konfliktloesning.dk/files/Meeting_Conflicts_Mindfully.pdf