

ALL YOU NEED IS PEACE

**A pocket manual on family mediation
and how to peacefully
resolve conflicts**

**By
Rossana Caselli**





Centro Nazionale per il Volontariato

Via A. Catalani, 158 - LUCCA
Tel. 0583 419500 - Fax 0583 419501
www.centrovolontariato.it
e-mail: cnv@centrovolontariato.it

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*...save me,
save them, save yourself,
save ourselves...*

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PRESENTATION

A work group coordinated by Rossana Caselli has completed the project entitled "Ancora Matilde" fulfilling the thoughts and reflections of the previous, analogous work. The concept of conflict mediation has been expanded from the family environment to the social environment in its largest dimension: schools, the workplace, administrative establishments, health care, and judicial institutions.

Each an opportunity where we can learn to become "builders of peace" beginning with our own personal experiences.

Our small manual is issued at a time when we are anxiously following nations throughout the world debating over the use of weapons or mediation as a means of resolving conflicts, while a large part of the world population has already made its choice, both personal and public, for peaceful resolutions.

Perhaps, as is usually the case, we need to begin with the individual and the community and subsequently go on from there. We have no aspiration but to make a small contribution.

Maria Eletta Martini

INTRODUCTION

We all share the responsibility to promote cultural and social change in order that conflicts, both internal and external, in families or between nations, do not evolve into acts of violence or war waged against each other. They need to be viewed as areas of dialogue and civil confrontation in full respect of any or all differences.

Impeding violence is everyone's responsibility

Imposing oneself on one or more persons signifies not respecting the other's freedom of thought or action, his differences, whether in the nature of opinion, religion, race, sex, or culture. The United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, in its first entry states that "each human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights. Each is endowed with reason and conscience and should behave toward one another in the spirit of brotherhood". "Non violence" is each person's right, recognized in the spirit of the brotherhood which unites them.

It's particularly easy to use forms of violence on the "weak". That's why, for example, the rights of children and adolescents are among those most difficult to defend.

In order to defend these rights, the fundamental Bill of Rights of the European Union affirms that “children have the right to have every need cared for and to be protected for their well being...” and that “in every proceeding...the interest of the child must be considered of the foremost importance...” (Article 24).

Therefore, as members of volunteer organizations and public institutions, as European citizens we are all called to see to it that all conflicts, beginning with domestic dissention, do not become expressions of violence, in particular, in the case of children and adolescents towards whom adults have specific obligations.

This small manual would like to contribute to the attentive consideration of how we may learn to manage conflicts in a non violent manner, whether the conflicts are domestic or social, and on how mediation can be used in such conflicts and particularly, in aiding those who are defenceless.

Our attention is turned toward adults, but even to young people, who are the sons of today and the parents of tomorrow. They are the representatives of that better future to which every generation aspires: a future which we would like, one day, to be non violent.

THE CONFLICT

We are immersed in conflicts: the only variable is their intensity. At home: between parents and children, brothers and sisters, grandparents, in-laws with daughter-in-laws or with son-in-laws. Usually these conflicts are due to generational differences or in the sexes, and often they are imbedded in the family ties which unite us. Socially: at school, in the workplace, in our neighbourhood. We are confronted with a variety of conflicts, between different decision making levels or between different levels in the social hierarchy, between those who seem to be similar to us and between those we see as being “different”. In extreme cases, conflicts may develop into terrorist attacks or war. Often, we’re at conflict with ourselves, for instance, when we need to make a difficult decision or one which contradicts with a part of us.

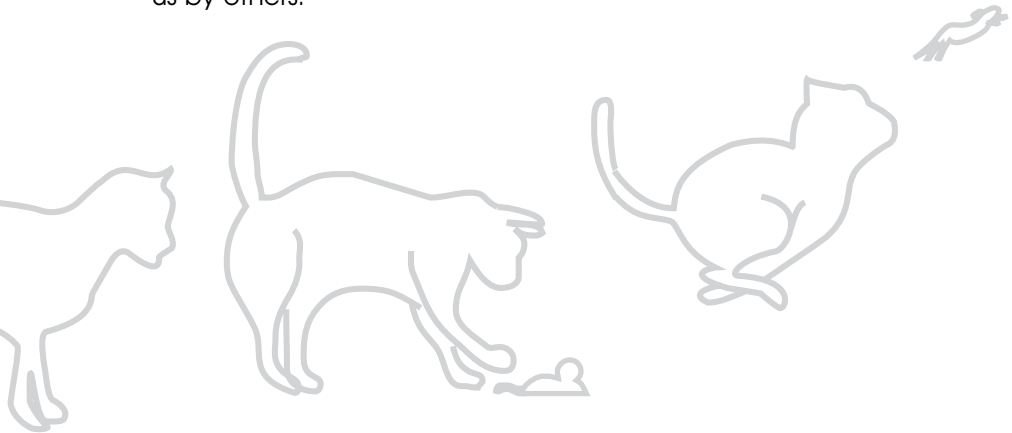
But, what is a conflict?

A conflict is a controversy, an opposition, a difference between opposite wants, tendencies and interests. And all of this contrast is a part of our life and our life’s story

Our growth as an adult, the unfolding of our personality in the various facets of life are often marked by conflicts. Reality often clashes with our desires and opinions; it is limiting and therefore redefines our personality and our inclinations.

A conflict can be very tiring and painful but often helps us to mature our concept of and comprehension of reality.

For this reason, every conflict is capable of changing the way we live in and see the world. When we are forced to confront others, we redefine our own identity through the relationships which connect us to the world around us. And this, at times, is so difficult that we only do so when impelled due to the conflicts “proposed” to us and imposed on us by others.



ANGER

Getting angry is natural. Often, it happens when we're immersed in a conflict within ourselves or with others. Anger is a feeling and feelings are spontaneous, at times as uncontrollable as an inundated river.

Thousands of years ago, our ancestors had to fight for survival and they had no other choice but to fight. Dangers surrounded them: of course they became angry! It was the only way they had to survive. When they became angry, their bodies were prepared to attack. Therefore, they were ready to hunt, attack, or defend. Fear helped them to escape if the situation became too risky.

Even today, when we're afraid or angry, our bodies act in much the same way: our hormones begin circulating and these "messengers" send the call to our brain, which in return sends the call to our body to prepare to fight or run.

Therefore getting angry is natural: it's an alarm system which prepares us for a confrontation which may require all of our mental and physical capacities. Our heart beats strongly, our cheeks redden, our stomach turns, our hands itch and we feel like we're a volcano ready to erupt.

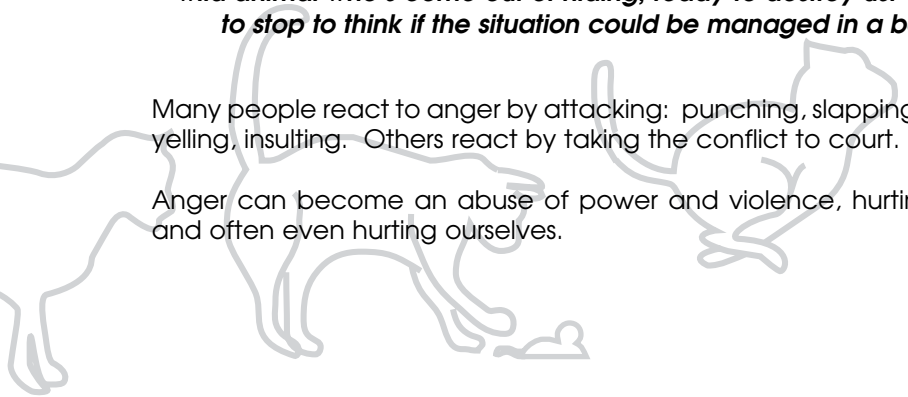
Remaining angry during conflicts certainly makes us feel very much alive: it puts us in contact with the very roots of our existence, with a sense of choice, with comparing ourselves with others and therefore with the very meaning that we give to life. For this reason, the anger

we express during a conflict can be positive. It represents not only the search for identity but also our victory over frustration. It may be a “negative” power in lieu of other powers at disposition, but it remains a way of comparing ourselves with others and with ourselves. Anger arousing from conflicts is a vital energy which we put into movement and which usually involves others.

What we must try to avoid is attacking the other person as if he’s a wild animal who’s come out of hiding, ready to destroy us. We need to stop to think if the situation could be managed in a better way

Many people react to anger by attacking: punching, slapping, kicking, yelling, insulting. Others react by taking the conflict to court.

Anger can become an abuse of power and violence, hurting others and often even hurting ourselves.



VIOLENCE

There are many ways to define violence.

We define violence a voluntary, compulsive act, used by one person towards another in order to force the receiver to act against his own will

Violence may be physical (slapping, punching, and the various methods used to inflict physical lesions): when one's anger is bursting, it's usually expressed violently or in some physically aggressive manner.

But violence isn't just physical. There is a psychological violence which expresses itself with threats, abuse, blackmail, blame, deception. It forces one into acting against his or her own will. This is often the case of sexual abuse in children and adolescents. They are victims of psychological violence, forced upon them by the abuser and leaving them incapable of fighting back.

Therefore, violence is composed of a number of methods used to condition and control the free will of another person. It forces the person to act against his own will while eliminating any possibility of developing self determination

There's a violence between "equals": for example, classmates, servicemen, romantic rivals. Competition, in any area, is always a fertile ground for violence. It's a matter of proving who is the "strongest".

There's another form of violence found in the area of "imbalance of power". The "superior" due to major physical, economical, cultural, social, or sexual force, asserts himself on another (who has no choice but to submit) in order to silence him or not even take him into consideration.

These are active forms of violence, in that they direct specific action toward the victim. There are also many forms of passive violence, such as the lack of medical attention or of aiding a person's mental development or growth towards independence. These forms are very subtle but have a great impact.

SILENCE

Violence and maltreatment, especially when repeatedly exerted on the same person over a period of time, create a state of confusion, fear, and even shame in their victim. The victim becomes incapable of expressing his or her own will. This becomes an excuse for the doer of the act to continue the use of violence. The doer views the victim's lack of determination as a consent to his or her continuation, denying to himself and to the victim the very existence of the aggression.

This is often true in the case of paedophiles: the doer claims to care for his victim and to actually love him. He declares to be caring for a neglected child. This "nice" paedophile deceives in order to abuse his victim and refuses to acknowledge the victim's pain, interpreting his fearful submission, confusion, silence as a sign of reciprocal love and not as the result of the trauma.

The act has achieved its desired effect: it has annihilated the victim's will, it has induced the victim's silence and has even achieved an apparent "consent" for which the perpetrator of the act accepts as "permission" to continue the violence. The cycle destroys the victim's free will.

Often violence develops in the victim's silence. This is why it is very important for each and every one of us to be attentive, to listen, and to be aware of the signals being transmitted to us. We mustn't allow ourselves to be deceived by the perpetrator of the violence

LOVE AND FREEDOM ARE THE OPPOSITE OF VIOLENCE

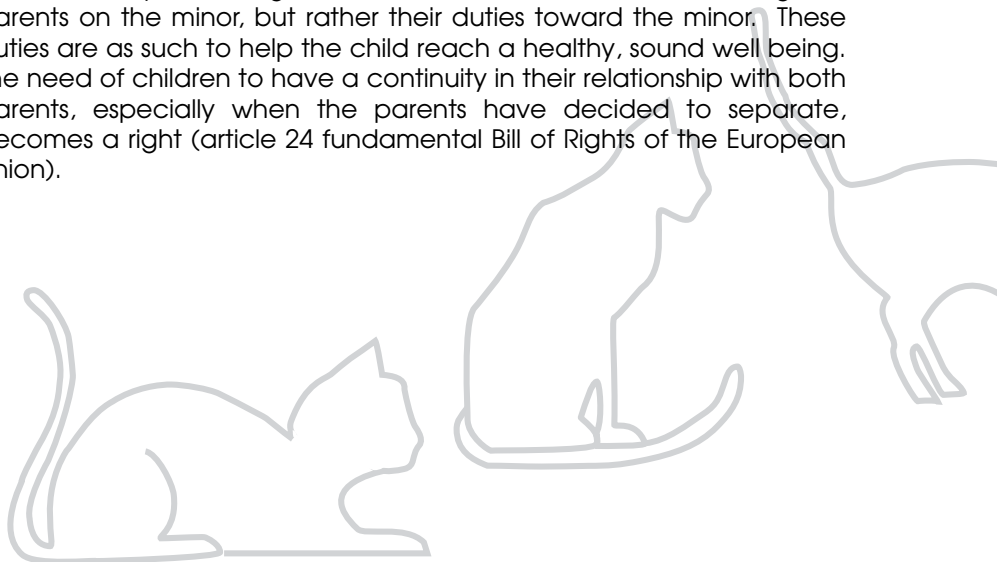
If on the one hand, violence forces us to do something we don't want to do, on the other hand, love and freedom do the opposite.

Freedom defined as free will and independence, perceived as a right (and guaranteed as a precise will and moral conscience, both social and political) forms the foundation of reciprocal respect between those who view themselves as bearers of equal rights and merit.

If viewed as devotion love, has the function of assuring happiness and well being. It also signifies full respect of each individual's very being, will and desires on an equal level and without constriction. Loving someone signifies nurturing the development of personality, inherent potential, desires, independence, self-expression and combining these characteristics with our own, making them our life project. This is why two people who make the choice to share their lives-different yet with equal rights-constitute a family. This union is not a matter of social rules which only allow room for "adaptation", but rather a free choice which is renewed daily. At times this creates tension and conflicts due to different habits, behaviour and our very way of viewing what constitutes a family.

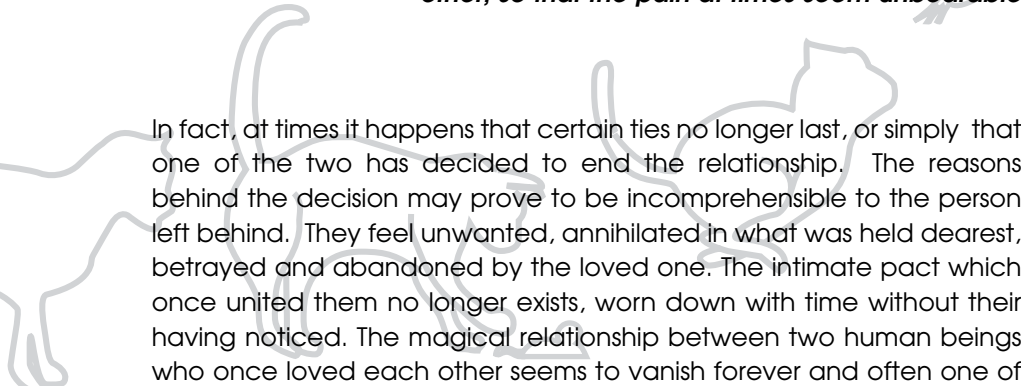
***Staying together, today more than ever, is a free choice.
Our loved one remains with us if we are capable of loving
and being loved, regardless of the defects or weaknesses of both***

Children, being part of the family, retain their own rights and independence: they are not simply minors who must be supervised, but rather individuals with their own specific needs which must be protected and nourished. Adults have a precise responsibility towards children. The parental right, therefore, assumes not so much the right of parents on the minor, but rather their duties toward the minor. These duties are as such to help the child reach a healthy, sound well being. The need of children to have a continuity in their relationship with both parents, especially when the parents have decided to separate, becomes a right (article 24 fundamental Bill of Rights of the European Union).



SHIPWRECKED

In a family, as elsewhere, it's important to respect the other's free will, because we neither belong to each other by duty nor by love. This becomes especially difficult when one wants to separate, hurting the other, so that the pain at times seem unbearable

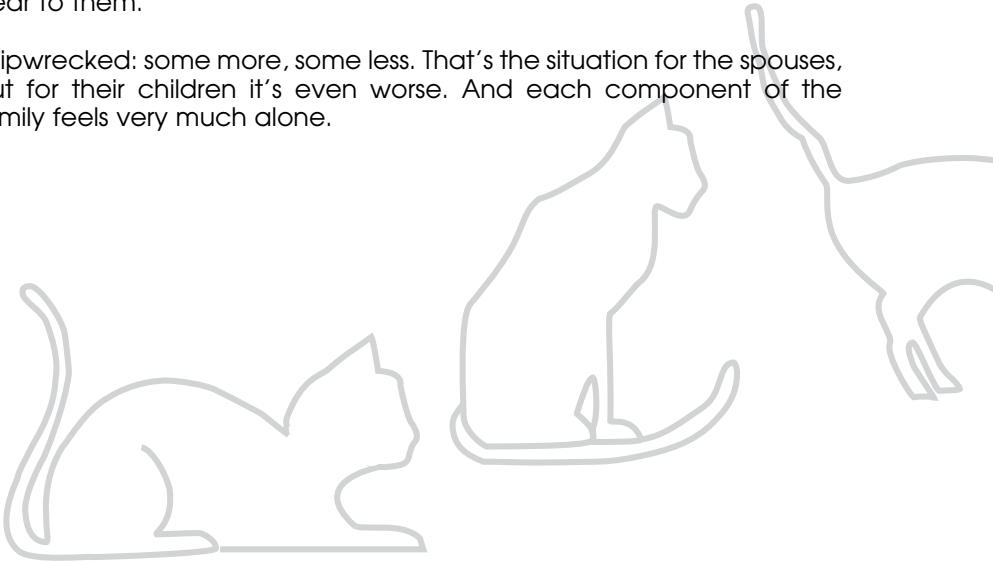


In fact, at times it happens that certain ties no longer last, or simply that one of the two has decided to end the relationship. The reasons behind the decision may prove to be incomprehensible to the person left behind. They feel unwanted, annihilated in what was held dearest, betrayed and abandoned by the loved one. The intimate pact which once united them no longer exists, worn down with time without their having noticed. The magical relationship between two human beings who once loved each other seems to vanish forever and often one of the two never even realized it.

Becoming aggressive seems the natural response to a situation in which we feel that the need to be taken into consideration for all our good qualities has suddenly changed. What we want is to be esteemed by our loved one again, along with regaining our self esteem

The loss of this identity causes them to not know who they are anymore...shipwrecked in a storm, cast in conflicts with themselves and with the world of affection which only a short time before was most dear to them.

Shipwrecked: some more, some less. That's the situation for the spouses, but for their children it's even worse. And each component of the family feels very much alone.



FAMILY CRISIS, SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Today, on the average in Europe, one out of every three marriages ends in divorce. The average length of a marriage is about twelve years. There are vast differences, however, from country to country. In northern Europe there are countries whose rate is 50 divorces to every 100 marriages. In the area of the Mediterranean the rate is 20 divorces to every 100 marriages, although this statistic tends to be rising. If we take into consideration separations in Italy, in 2002, we have doubled the separations that we had in 1985.

The children involved, each year, in our country alone are about 70,000 and in Europe the figure rises to approximately one million. In northern Europe, these children tend to seek their independence at an early age, more so than children in the Mediterranean area. Often this is because, in one case out of two, the original family no longer exists. What exists are new families formed after the separation or divorce.

Due to the increased number of broken marriages in Europe, the problem of children belonging to divided families has become significant. The family has lost its original identity. The children are often contested and, unknown to them, used as shields in the parental conflict. At times, ignored, maltreated, and innocent spectators of the violence between the parents or towards themselves. They are searching for a new equilibrium, as they are no longer held as the centre of attention in the family

Yet, the ex-spouses continue being parents. At times their conflicts reach such degrees of violence that they are no longer in control and are unable to place the well being of their children in first place.

For this reason it's important to be capable of managing conflicts: to avoid a situation of pain and violence which may become irremediable.



THE CONFLICT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE VIOLENT

Violence is always a sign of conflict because there are various wills and strengths opposing each other. But conflict need not be considered synonymous with violence. On the contrary!

Violence is often useless and damaging, even for the apparent "winner". The "loser", the victim, or the problem will always creep up again, demanding all our attention, even due to the remorse which has become an integral part of us. The violence expressed in conflicts proves to be an inadequate solution to the problem: the once violent reaction when we had to defend ourselves from the threat of wild beasts, or other life threatening environmental situations, is no longer adequate in responding to today's conflicts.

Sometimes violence becomes a type of revenge for having been wronged (or at least, we believe ourselves to have been wronged). By using violence we are trying to call to attention someone who doesn't want to listen to our reasons. In either case, we believe we are creating our own form of justice.

Violence is rarely a thunderbolt in a clear sky: it takes time for violence to mature, slowly finding favourable ground in which to grow. It has many allies and grows silently because many people prefer to ignore it until it's inevitably too late.

In conflicts which have stretched out over a certain length of time, as in domestic conflicts between spouses, the violence is often connected to situations in which the conflict has been ignored, or that the spouses were incapable of handling by themselves. The conflict was hidden for too long, ignored, or not managed properly when suddenly it explodes into an uncontrollable situation, like a fire which gets out of hand

Sometimes the parties involved assume the attitude of “either I win or you win”, a face off: just a short time before they loved each other, now they’re enemies fighting each other. It’s just in this type of situation, that the way of confronting the problem in a respectable manner gets out of hand due to the varying emotions and essential differences in each party. These very differences which once blended into each other are now unbearable, and all we want to do is to destroy them.

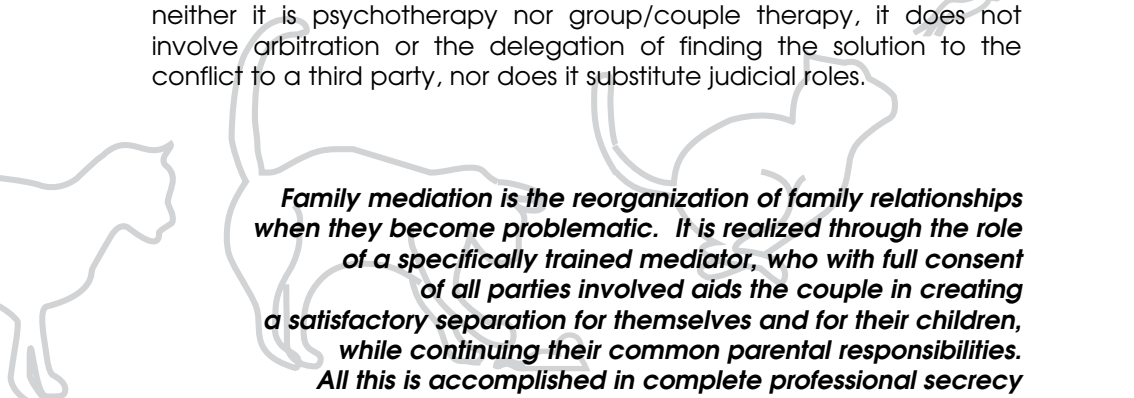
When the conflict becomes violent it's because we view it as the only solution to the controversy and we can't find the way out

But, there are actually various ways to manage conflicts and resolve controversies.

MEDIATION AS A POSSIBLE AID

When a family finds itself in a crisis and is incapable of resolving its problems in a positive manner, it often searches for help from a third party, as in the case of family mediation.

Family mediation is a service offered to families and may be requested by one or more family members: it is not legal or technical consultation, neither it is psychotherapy nor group/couple therapy, it does not involve arbitration or the delegation of finding the solution to the conflict to a third party, nor does it substitute judicial roles.

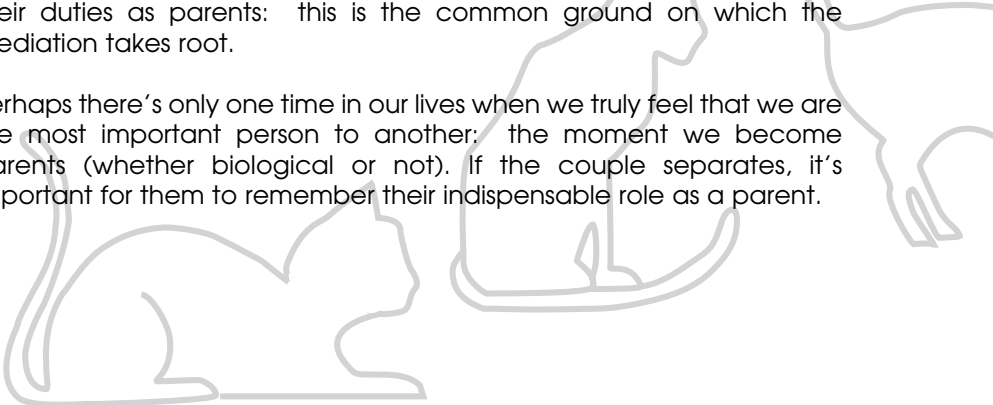


Family mediation is the reorganization of family relationships when they become problematic. It is realized through the role of a specifically trained mediator, who with full consent of all parties involved aids the couple in creating a satisfactory separation for themselves and for their children, while continuing their common parental responsibilities. All this is accomplished in complete professional secrecy and outside of the courtroom. The mediator's role is to facilitate communication while aiding the parties involved search for the solution to their problem, in particular for the well being of their children

In family mediation there are no winners or losers. The goal is to see beyond the present conflict in order to understand the possible negative consequences that may be felt by all parties involved. It attempts to foresee and limit any possible form of violence, in full knowledge of the devastating effects such violence would have on the future of the children involved.

Family mediation proposes a “both can win” attitude. In order to do so, the parties must be willing to listen to each other and respect one another, especially when dealing with their varied needs and wants, knowing that each will have a future after having dealt with the conflict. Mediation gives hope. It tends to recreate the respect and trust which are often lost during the conflict, and helps the parties realize that no matter what they are still capable of being good parents. The mediator sustains them in the reciprocal continuation of their duties as parents: this is the common ground on which the mediation takes root.

Perhaps there’s only one time in our lives when we truly feel that we are the most important person to another: the moment we become parents (whether biological or not). If the couple separates, it’s important for them to remember their indispensable role as a parent.



THE ROUTE OF MEDIATION

It seems almost impossible that so many of the problems relating to understanding each other, so much pain and suffering such as that found in a family crisis, can be confronted and managed by using dialogue and reciprocal agreement. But that's just what happens in family mediation.

Family mediation is not a magic formula and is well aware of the fact that not every conflict can be resolved through mediation. But it certainly can help those who request it. Mediation is a voluntary act, desired by the parties in contrast, temporarily suspending the judicial roles, while looking for possible solutions.

TIME: it requires various encounters, usually up to 15, generally held every two weeks. The number and frequency of the encounters varies with the conflict itself together with other aspects to be taken into consideration, such as the lives of the children involved and the manner in which the parents confront the situation.

PHASES: Mediation is divided into three phases.

1) Consent = in order to put mediation into act, the parties involved must be willing to meet, listen, and responsibly work together for the sake of their children. This consent is given after the mediator has separately met with each party, explaining to each the goal of mediation, its rules and regulations, while listening to the "problem" which divides them and is impeding a collaborative and proper disposition.

2) Feasibility = not all conflicts can benefit from mediation. The mediator must decide, after having met with the parties involved, if the conflict can be resolved through mediation or not. Generally, if there are various pathologies present or if the mediator deems necessary a therapeutic type of intervention, mediation is considered out of the question.

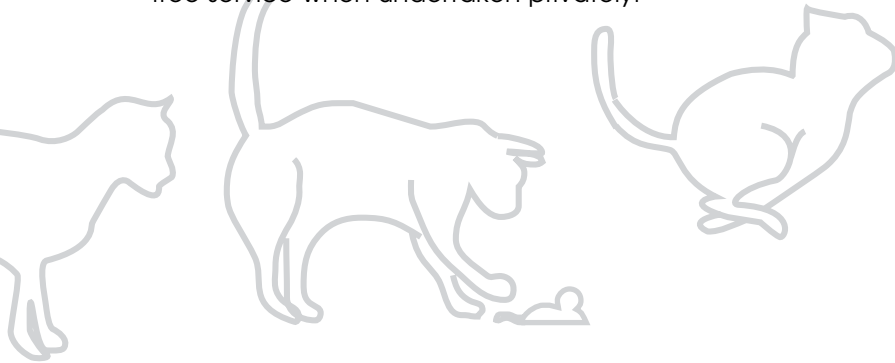
3) Mediation = if the parties involved have consented to follow the route of mediation and such mediation has been considered feasible, the actual mediation can begin.

COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS: if the mediation has proved positive, establishing a continuation of reciprocal parental responsibilities based on availability, collaboration, and comprehension, the parties may present an actual program to the judicial official presiding their case. This is their own personal choice. The mediation itself is considered private, and to guarantee the parties involved that the actual responsibility and management of the conflict is in every respect theirs, the contents of the mediation will remain strictly confidential if they so desire.

JUDICIAL ROLE: Mediation takes on a role in that it attempts to avoid the development of "courtroom battles" which can become long and costly. It's far better for the family, both psychologically and emotionally, to avoid ulterior occasions for conflict and possible lawsuits. In mediation an agreement is achieved which is put into act through the intervention of a lawyer who will supervise all personal and

patrimonial aspects of the case. Since mediation is a tentative solution to a non-judicial conflict, it must be carried out during the “time-out”. It’s obvious that a judicial recourse during the course of the mediation would only interfere with the eventual outcome and would be detrimental to both parties involved. A judicial collaboration once the mediation is completed is indispensable, with the lawyers of each party presenting his or her requests.

COSTS: Mediation is a free service in those social sectors of governmental institutions (local or judicial) when available. It is not a free service when undertaken privately.



THE MEDIATOR: AN UNDEFINED ROLE

A family mediator must be professionally trained. Every country has its own schools and even within the same nation methods may vary. The authoritative given to this professional group is largely due to a set of self-imposed regulations designed by the mediators themselves. The European Forum on Family Mediation has elaborated a standard used by all members of the European Union. This standard proves very useful in the development of the professional training of the mediators.

Some nations or regions (as in the case of the region of Tuscany) have regulated these roles and are a part of the acknowledged social professions.

Public schools offering courses in family mediation do not exist. Training is available through the private sector. These private "schools" also often function as the gathering place where mediators meet to exchange experiences, methods and verify results

The private schools prove to be the site where mediators continue the learning process, often comparing the various methods utilized (these differences being more of a formal rather than practical nature).

The four essential differences in methodology used may be summarized as follows:

1- Children should only be present during the mediation in extreme cases, although some schools of thought retain it favourable to have children present at the last encounter, or if they are adolescents.

2- The accord resulting from the mediation may be partial (education, relationships) or more integral (patrimonial and financial agreements) but must be free of any legal or judicial confrontations. For this reason, some schools of family mediation exclude the possibility of a mediator being a lawyer while other schools do not. However, all mediators believe in the importance of a solid collaboration between the various professions.

3- The actual approach used in family mediation may vary; some choose to place the children's future in first place while others focus on the family in its tri-generational outlook (grandparents, parents, children).

4- Family meditation may be carried out in family centres, clinics, local social service offices, or in association with volunteer organizations. Often family mediation is promoted by the various associations of mediators or even by the single mediator, especially in those cases in which the family and its crisis is seen as a "private" matter.

THE “CULTURE” OF MEDIATION

Mediation is such a radically different approach in viewing conflicts that we can define it as an actual “culture of mediation”. This is more due to the philosophy behind mediation than to the actual techniques utilized; managing conflicts in order to impede violence, while focussing on dialogue and civil confrontations.

***Mediation does not mean meeting at a half way point,
finding a solution by a compromise
in which each part must renounce something.
The etymology of the word mediation signifies to “divide,
to open in the middle”. It is the recognition of a problem,
a “crisis” (from “krino” signifying separation, choice, breakage)
for which one searches for a solution.
It is the beginning of a process of transformation***

Mediation becomes the laboratory in which people attempt to renew a pact of living together in full respect of their reciprocal dignity and pain; a pact which unites their choices, responsibilities, and even a new outlook for the future.

Mediation is a way of dealing with the conflict, but that does not imply that the mediator elaborates and imposes his or her own solutions to the conflict. The mediator focuses on the parties involved, not on the

actual solution. The parties are incapable of arriving at a solution on their own and look for help from the outside, but that doesn't mean that the mediator can take their place and resolve the conflict for them. They must find the solution to their problem.

This is why mediation is a learning process: it is understanding and being understood. It means acquiring a new consciousness and new capabilities. It also signifies leaving enough room for fair treatment of the conflict because it is now divided, renewed and deeply felt by both parties. Mediation offers neutral territory where those involved can slow down, talk about their feelings, listen to each other, and try to understand what happened and what is going to happen. It means being able to direct their own lives or at least attempt to do so.



SOCIAL MEDIATION

Mediation of this nature is applied in various social sectors, besides the domestic area. It exists in most European countries

Here are some examples:

at school, to help children deal with problems such as “bully-ism” and other forms of aggression often found among classmates, and occasionally between student-teacher or teacher-teacher relationships;

at work, where there is an ever increasing number of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) cases. These are recognized solutions to controversies in the workplace and favour the entrance of workers such as the disabled into the workplace;

in public administration, in order to facilitate the liaison between citizens and services offered through public administration by creating a specific set of rules and regulations for mediation.

(In the European Union, for example, there is a specific division for European mediation);

in health care, to better inform citizens of their state of health, in particular when important decisions must be made regarding their health or the health of their loved ones (for example, in the area of paediatric oncology);

in the metropolitan area, to address the themes of urban safety, juvenile delinquency, crime victims. The goal is to propose the problems in terms of a divided responsibility rather than reducing the problem to “cops and robbers”;

in the social realm, with intercultural mediation, to encourage the integration of immigrants with our culture and conversely to enhance our knowledge and respect of other cultures;

in the area of crime, to find alternative solutions to the “punishment” handed down to in particular to minors, promoting a program of rectification of the damage and suffering inflicted. This is due to the realization that the judicial system is often inadequate in resolving conflicts, due to the rigidity of regulations in the system to generally refer to predetermined categories (winners and losers, victims and culprits, etc.) and delegating to third parties the resolution of the controversy.

LET'S LEARN TO HANDLE CONFLICTS BEFORE THEY BECOME VIOLENT

From the various examples of mediation, we can discern various ways of confronting conflicts: a sort of road to peace. We've tried summarizing the most significant issues, according to our opinion, giving way to a guide which has no particular pretence. It's not a prescription, but just a series of thoughts to help each of us discover the competence and capability to face conflicts in a non violent manner: competence and capability which each and every one of us should try to refine.

1) FIRST OF ALL, LET'S NOT HIDE THE CONFLICTS

Often we're afraid of conflicts so we try to hide them, try not to face them, not even admit that they exist.

There are some areas where it's difficult to recognize a conflict, for instance, in the area of pacifism. Peace regarded as an abstract harmony often hides the will of those who desire to show others that it's possible to live together in peaceful harmony. This abstract peace is passive; it doesn't permit much intervention in order to resolve conflicts quickly. At home, at school, with friends, those who cause problems are viewed as threats. "Behave" is repeated at school as at home, almost as if silence becomes synonymous with tranquillity. In this abstract "pacifism", this hypocritical conformity, conflicts are neither recognized nor confronted. The conflict explodes and the bearer of the dispute becomes a threat to the others, especially if their timing was wrong. And, it usually is.

Let's learn to stop ignoring the existence of conflicts, which we usually do out of fear, and begin perceiving and confronting them at their origins

2) LET'S REMEMBER THAT EVERY CONFLICT IS THE EXPRESSION OF A PROBLEM

Conflicts are neither wars in which to rage battle nor fires to douse with silence or irresponsibility. They are problems to which our attention has been called and must be confronted. Let's avoid falling into the trap of confusing the conflict between two or more sides with the problem they express.

Even going to war may be a way of avoiding the conflict since it simply eliminates the so called enemy. Unsolved problems usually have a way of returning, in a number of ways and at various times. They then demand our attention to the point where if left unsolved or ignored they continue to grow, becoming more intricate and very well rooted, and perhaps unsolvable.

If conflicts are problems which need to be confronted, at times brought on even unconsciously, it's best to define the problems behind the conflict before they become too difficult to manage.

Therefore, it's important to pay less attention to the bearer of the conflict: "you're stupid", "you don't know anything", "it's your fault if...", and more attention to the actual problem.

We need to distinguish the cause of the conflict by the “symptoms” it manifests and the emotions it creates within us. We need to try to identify the problem which is at the root of the conflict, and once identified, attempt to help the other person involved understand it, in order to work together toward the solution

Some examples:

- If two young people are arguing because one soiled the other’s clothing, the dynamics of exactly what happened need to be understood.
- If spouses are in crisis and decide to separate, they need to understand what problems are at the origin of their division, that is, agree on what went wrong in the marriage.
- If two co-workers are arguing over the budget, they need to be specific and explain their differences.

3) WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

Once the problem has been identified in an acceptable way to those involved, we must ask ourselves if the problem belong to each side or to only one of the two. There may be reciprocal advantages for those involved by confronting the problem and finding acceptable solutions.

The conflict is a relationship between the parties involved and the problem itself, just as the solution belongs to both parties

We often waste a lot of energy, which remains “locked” within the conflict, because we don’t see the problem as being ours. Are we sure that the problem is only one-sided? If it is, can we help the other find a solution?

Some examples:

- In the case of the two young people arguing over the soiled clothing, does the problem belong to the one whose clothes were ruined or even the other who might be poorly considered by his friends?
- In the case of the couple who is separating, wouldn’t giving their children a common version of the facts help both of them together with making it easier on their children?
- In the case of a third world country which has attacked a more powerful country, does the problem only belong to the poor country or to both?

And what if the problem is ours alone?

At times we have problems which we don’t confront in the conflicts where they originate (for example: at work) but we “carry” them elsewhere (for example: at home) with other people (for example: children, neighbours). Does it happen just because it’s easier to take

our anger out on them? It's a question we need to ask ourselves, trying to take the problems back to their origins, and when possible, try to help others do the same. Many neighbourhood disputes have these characteristics.

4) LET'S AVOID THE FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER

Once we've decided whose problem it is, let's not toughen up. There's another myth which prohibits our confronting problems or which makes us start off on the "wrong foot": the power struggle. Power struggles involve the direct use of force in order to win.

Generally, in particular social groups where there's a strong sense of belonging (rival bands, family clans, xenophobic groups, etc.), this energy is fortified by the need to fight the enemy. Often, the enemy is fabricated in order to view him as being different and this difference is what the group thrives on, where they find their identity. The group and its visions are good while those on the outside are bad. The battle of strength is often accepted in our society, finding many allies and supporters. It's especially found in typically male groups where strength is an essential characteristic of roles ("bully-ism", boot camp, etc.).

For example: conflicts involving young people or in the family often includes someone who incites another. The person who becomes involved can't just walk away. He or she is expected to fight back or be considered a coward.

In families undergoing separation or disputing for some other reason, taking sides is typical.

The power struggle, even when reaching the point of war, doesn't manage conflicts. It only eliminates the enemy and possibly creates a "peace plan" which views the conflicts as threats of those who are unwilling to adhere to the social rules of the group. This is managing strength, not the conflict.

Let's rid ourselves of the myths of abstract pacifism and of violence as a proof of strength. We need to accept the concept that peace is found in the non violent management of the conflict

Some examples:

- If a husband replies to his wife, who scolded him for spilling wine on his pants, by saying that she's a lousy housewife, the conflict becomes face-to-face.
- If one of two colleagues, who are arguing over the budget, begins to ignore the other and any request for financial information he or she makes, the conflict becomes face-to-face.

In conclusion, if we respond to a provocation in equal measure, we put into action a vicious circle.

5) LET'S GET TO THE POINT

One of the problems that comes up in conflicts is the interruption of communication: each one for him or herself, and in the midst of the silence and mistrust, arms him or herself against the other.

We need to learn that communication is the only way to find a solution to the conflict. We need to communicate exactly what we're going through as clearly as possible. Getting to the point means giving your point of view and allowing the other person to express his or her point of view without interrupting ("you're wrong", "your viewpoint is way off base", "are you kidding?"). It means defining our way of looking at the problem, even putting ourselves on the line, because we're exposing our weaknesses and doubts.

Talking shouldn't be verbal aggression. It is being able to express the way we feel about the problem and its effects on our lives

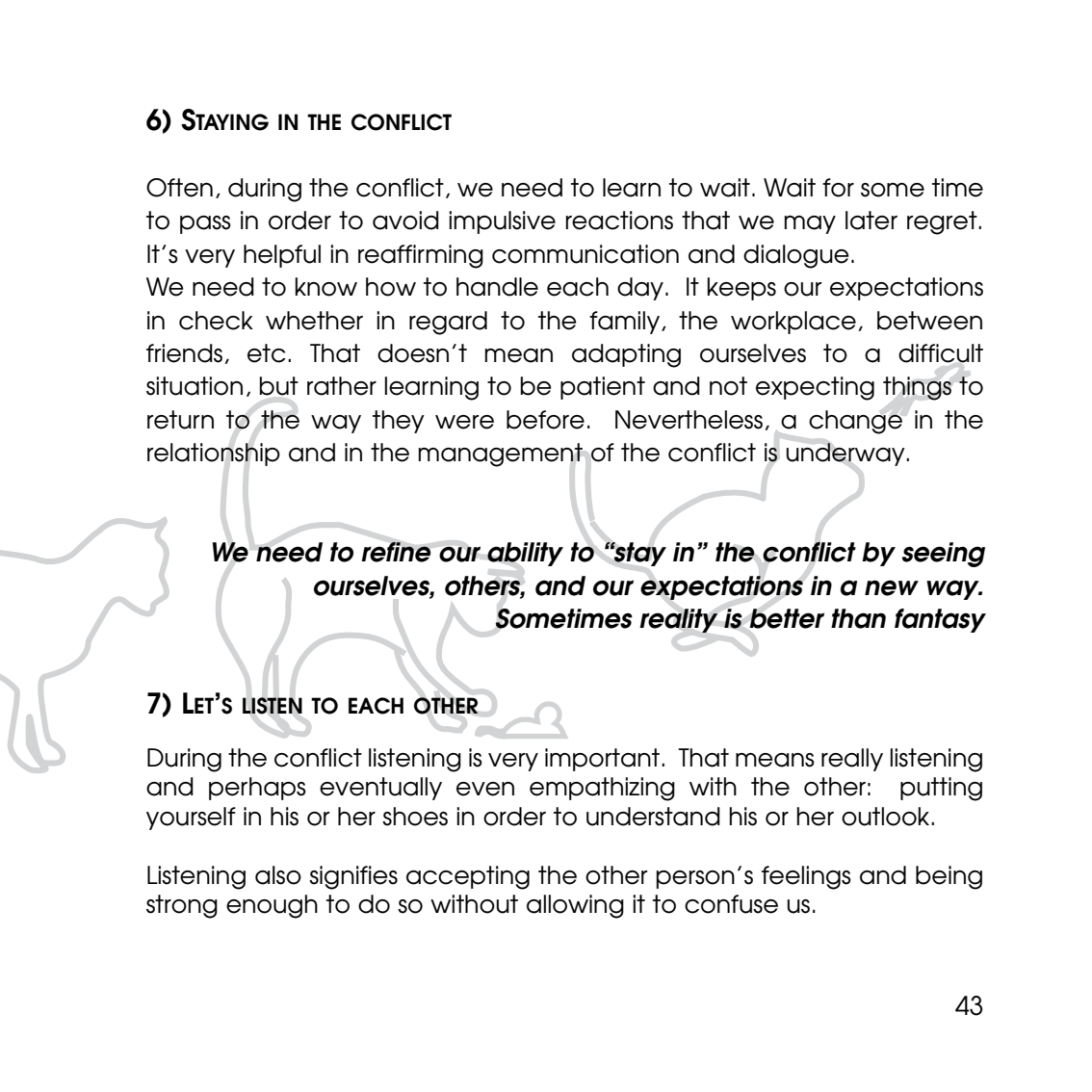
It is not by attacking or ignoring the other person that the situation will improve. We need to express ourselves without offending the other.

For example: you can scold your child who's sitting in front of the television by saying "you're selfish and impolite", or you can get to the point of the matter: "I don't like your sitting in front of the television and yelling that way while I'm trying to listen to the news."

6) STAYING IN THE CONFLICT

Often, during the conflict, we need to learn to wait. Wait for some time to pass in order to avoid impulsive reactions that we may later regret. It's very helpful in reaffirming communication and dialogue.

We need to know how to handle each day. It keeps our expectations in check whether in regard to the family, the workplace, between friends, etc. That doesn't mean adapting ourselves to a difficult situation, but rather learning to be patient and not expecting things to return to the way they were before. Nevertheless, a change in the relationship and in the management of the conflict is underway.



We need to refine our ability to “stay in” the conflict by seeing ourselves, others, and our expectations in a new way. Sometimes reality is better than fantasy

7) LET'S LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

During the conflict listening is very important. That means really listening and perhaps eventually even empathizing with the other: putting yourself in his or her shoes in order to understand his or her outlook.

Listening also signifies accepting the other person's feelings and being strong enough to do so without allowing it to confuse us.

***Listening is fundamental in finding the solution to a conflict.
Sometimes conflicts become violent because
our need to be heard is left unanswered***

Even the victim wants to be heard by the assaulter. It is a type of informal "justice", one which is much deeper than a justice sought in the courtroom. At times, thanks to listening, one develops a sense of guilt for actions committed and therefore begins a process of change, bringing to light possible solutions or even reparation of the damage inflicted.

In mediation, reciprocal listening is highly valued.

8) BEING ABLE TO SAY "NO!"

The courage to be different, to be nonconforming, is fundamental in managing conflicts. Being able to say "no!" means taking a stand, an avoidance of conforming to something which would only lead to harm.

For example, young people often become involved in groups in which others are often harmed (rival bands, hooligans, and groups with a code of silence and submission). Being able to say "no" means having an opinion of your own, your own viewpoint, knowing who you are and protecting your values. Saying "no!" means being responsible and independent. It doesn't mean taking on a negative attitude but protecting yourself (for example: saying "no!" to friends instead of riding in a car with a drunken driver after an evening out together).

***Saying “NO!” means stopping others from hurting you.
Sometimes it even means stopping yourself from hurting others.
It means you put boundaries around your freedom
and ask others to respect it***

9) IF YOU CAN'T DO IT, ASK FOR HELP

Sometimes we realize that we can't handle the conflict by ourselves. That's the time to have the courage to ask for help: to a friend, a relative, a clergyman, to someone we know and who we think could be our mediator.

Asking for help can be very important: it means we're admitting being in trouble and allowing others to help us.

***Mediation can help you and there's professional assistance
available to you from family or social mediators.
Volunteer workers can direct you to what is available
A list of mediation centres can be found on our website:
www.centrovolontariato.it***

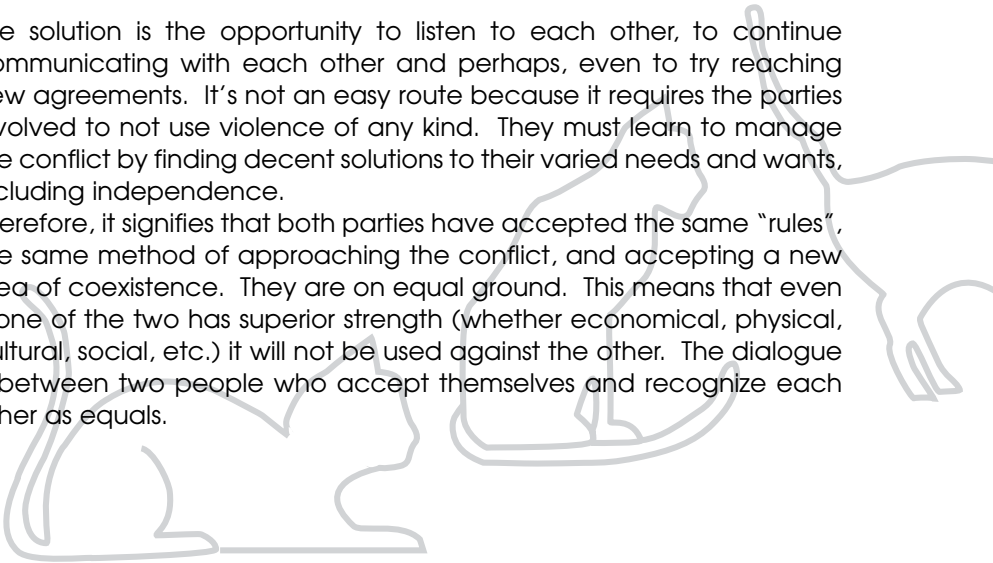
***Volunteer organizations are founded thanks to the people
who desire to help those unable to resolve difficulties.
A volunteer offers help and solidarity***

10) THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM ISN'T IN THE PAST OR IN THE PRESENT

The problem which is at the root of the conflict can be redefined by past and present actions. The solution, however, cannot. It is a part of the future. The future is intended as something we dare to do, aiming high toward a real understanding of human relationships and learning. This doesn't mean stipulating life agreements, but trying to resolve some of the small ones (for example, in the case of separation, trying to better organize your children's day).

The solution is the opportunity to listen to each other, to continue communicating with each other and perhaps, even to try reaching new agreements. It's not an easy route because it requires the parties involved to not use violence of any kind. They must learn to manage the conflict by finding decent solutions to their varied needs and wants, including independence.

Therefore, it signifies that both parties have accepted the same "rules", the same method of approaching the conflict, and accepting a new idea of coexistence. They are on equal ground. This means that even if one of the two has superior strength (whether economical, physical, cultural, social, etc.) it will not be used against the other. The dialogue is between two people who accept themselves and recognize each other as equals.

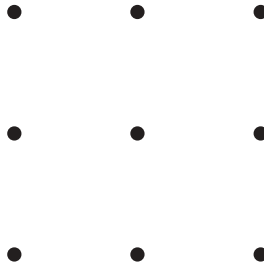


***There's no winner or loser. We either both win or both lose.
It's a new way to live together which is a part of the future, not of the past***

The goal of mediation is to facilitate this process. It aids the parties involved to avoid being overtaken by a sea of uncontrollable emotions or by an apparent peace which just can't hold up. It also helps them avoid using strength as a means of resolving their problems. It encourages dialogue, attentive listening, the recognition of each as a valid interlocutor, and mutual respect. It means **daring to find unexpected solutions**, beginning with everyday situations. It means planning a future and therefore **places hope in innovation, creativity and change**.

With this in mind, try to solve this "problem":

Unite all dots with 4 straight lines without lifting up your pencil and without passing over the same line twice (see the solution on page. 49)



CONCLUSION

Volunteers work in an area where the imbalance of power is frequent. They defend and promote those rights which are respected the least and help the needy and defenceless, not only at the time of need but also as a preventive measure.

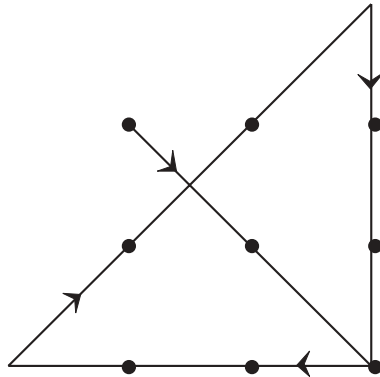
For this reason the National Centre for Volunteers has promoted, together with the European Commission, Justice Division, numerous initiatives in the area of combating violence directed at women and children (Project Daphne).

We believe it to be our duty to impede conflicts from expressing themselves violently, and to decrease the number of victims of violence especially for those persons whose rights are often ignored. In the family, it's possible for violence to be left unnoticed, not given the proper attention, or even hidden behind silence, especially when over the course of time this has become habit

Therefore, we must learn to recognize and manage conflicts correctly before they become forms of violence: in families as in other social areas, such as at school, the workplace, and institutions in general. Mediation

can help in the management of conflicts and the violence that it may provoke. We can find solutions outside of the typical schemes.

Solution to the “problem” from page. 47



Thanks to...

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Marilena *who had us think about the mediation of S. Egidio*

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