

'Conflicts are inherent to relationships. What we can do is prevent it from escalating, not increase the tension through our actions or words'

Interview with **Sara González Muro**, psychologist, psychotherapist, mediator, and educator. Member of Geuz. She will be in charge of the course **'Conflict Resolution and Negotiation in Socio-Educational Interventions with Young People'**



There is a lot to say about the positive side of conflict, but nobody really likes conflict, so is it really so positive?

The fact is we all experience conflicts to a greater or lesser extent in our daily lives, and the important thing is how we deal with them and what we can do to learn from them. That is the positive thing about conflict: it allows us to get to know ourselves better, to get to know other people better and, therefore, to improve ourselves. We tend to have conflict, tension, disagreements... with people who are different from us. The other person, who is different, questions us and enriches our lives.

We cannot avoid it; conflicts are inherent to relationships. What we can do is prevent it from escalating, not increase the tension through our actions or words. This is key in working with young people; we need to be trained and aware of how we interact in stressful situations. We need to learn strategies and processes that enable us to understand each other and communicate effectively and peacefully.

It makes me think about this society we are building, which is increasingly polarised, where it is sometimes difficult to accommodate what is different.

This is why conflict resolution is even more important today. We live in a highly diverse society, and positive coexistence (at home, at work, in the social and political environment) means being able to listen and talk to each other with respect to understand each other, to empathise with each other, to understand the other person's position or point of view, even if this does not mean agreeing with them.

We have conflicts with the other person because we feel, think or act differently. And although it may seem obvious, we will never feel, think or act the same as the other person. We have to explain ourselves, to make ourselves understood and to question the other person to understand. In polarisation, there is none of this. There is only black or white, there are no greys, and I am afraid that life is full of greys, a vast spectrum of greys. The good news is that we are bound to agree on some of the colours in the range from black to white.

Are you suggesting that it would always be possible to reach an agreement with the other person?

Indeed, as long as both parties are interested and want to experience a less stressful, calmer life. An agreement will be more or less satisfactory, depending on the compatibility of the actual interests of both people and their negotiation skills (ability to listen and express needs). Usually, when we work with young people, one of the parties in conflict has difficulty expressing what they feel, think, and need... in a suitable way. It is, therefore, extremely useful to incorporate these tools (active listening, assertive messages...) into daily life to facilitate communication, avoid conflict escalation, and promote agreements.

This is what this workshop is about, the skills to manage one's own and other people's conflicts in the most effective and peaceful way possible. We will first work on concepts and dynamics that always appear in conflictive situations and then practice effective communication, negotiation and mediation skills applied to situations of socio-educational interventions with young people.

So, it will be time to negotiate!

Yes! The method is practical and dynamic. It is the best way to identify our shortcomings and improve them and also to identify our strengths and enhance them. In addition, this makes the workshop more enjoyable and applicable from the very first moment.