**[Resolving conflicts](https://www.dawn.com/news/1818214/resolving-conflicts)**

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MORE battles are fought within and between kith and kin, than between states and sworn enemies. It is a fact that the harmony that should ideally exist in families is often wrecked, mostly by petty but

also major issues such as inheritance, financial and marriage-related matters. Frequently, it is a mere difference of opinion that leads to family disputes, with parties refusing to understand and tolerate the diversity of views.

Disputes within families almost always lead to unhappiness, a disturbed life and grief over time. While matrimonial disputes occur frequently in our society, fights between siblings, children (mainly sons) and parents and close relatives too are common. Brothers have been known to break off ties with each other, and others either stop communication or play out a cold war that is both unhealthy and painful, especially if the children of the warring parties are involved. Battles of ego, perceived slights and third-party gossip abound. Friends are prone to fighting over minor issues and too often a blossoming or fruitful relationship is laid to rest, because of minor misunderstandings.

Conflicts among people, including loved ones, are natural. Humans need to recognise their cause and manage them accordingly. If families are too often ripped apart by internal fighting, the angst and resentment of unresolved conflicts spills over to the larger society. Families are the building blocks of society and each is reflective of the other. Families need to develop the insight, wisdom and willingness to address internal issues as they arise, before letting them become major battles. In both cases, it is important for an individual or a group of individuals to be able to play the part of mediator and settle controversies as they arise.

Breaking off family ties is considered deplorable by God.

The ideal situation should be that the parties themselves recognise that their current relationship is unsound and harmful to themselves and their families and resolve their differences through dialogue and compassionate discussion. But where they feel that support of a third party is required, they may request a friend or an outsider to mediate. Mediation is highly recommended in Islam, as a desirable means of creating a peaceful environment and harmony among people.

The Quran and various ahadith underscore the necessity of making peace between people, particularly within families. “If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God; but if it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair: for God loves those who are fair (and just)” (49:9). Note the stress on justice and fairness. If anyone of the parties

is the aggressor, it would be unjust to make a compromise in his favour: indeed, he must be brought to understand the consequences of his transgression. And once he has realised his error, peace must be established in a fair manner. The parties must be reconciled in a way that yields a win-win situation for all, with no one having to give up his legitimate right. If the weaker party is forced to give in, this would merely incite the aggressor to become even more intolerant and could lead to continued arguments.

Breaking off relationships between families is considered by God to be a deplorable act. Kinship is to be revered and upheld. Increasing intolerance in society, however, is causing families to split up, with close relatives unwilling even to face each other. Such a situation requires intervention by others who might be sensitive to the issues at hand and whom the parties trust.

Various strategies can be used effecti­vely to resolve familial conflicts. The me­­d­iators should be pa­­­tient, neutral, tactful and diplomatic and willing to facilitate dialogue as long as necessary. Reconciliation (sulh) is of prime importance and the parties concerned need to be reminded of the desirability in God’s eyes of forgiveness and brother/sisterhood.

Even if a major injury has been caused, it is best, in God’s eyes, to forgive and give up one’s right to fight back (42:40). Similarly, avoiding a quarrel is best. According to a hadith (Sunan Daud), the Prophet (PBUH) said that a house in paradise is assured for one who avoids quarrelling even if he is in the right.

On the other hand, renouncing one’s rights continuously in order to establish peace would go against the principles of justice, equity and fairness, qualities that the Quran has insisted upon. Such an attitude will merely increase the unjust acts of the aggressor who will become more emboldened. As Hazrat Ali has said: “The disservice to ihsan (goodness) is exercising it in the wrong place.”

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