



The Impact of Ego on Conflict Emergence and Its Role in Hindering Mediation Efforts

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Understanding Ego in Human Relationships

The concept of ego is central to human relationships. It significantly influences the emergence and escalation of conflicts and the course of dialogue and negotiation during mediation processes. A balanced ego fosters self-confidence and protects rights, but an inflated ego becomes a barrier, causing individuals to focus solely on their interests and needs while disregarding others. This behavior obstructs trust-building and collaboration, impeding the resolution of disputes and conflicts.

Balanced Ego vs. Inflated Ego

A balanced ego enables individuals to express themselves confidently while respecting the existence and perspectives of others. This equilibrium encourages clarity in positions and safeguarding interests without escalating conflict. Conversely, an inflated ego prevents individuals from making concessions or admitting mistakes, even when it serves their interests. Fear of losing face or appearing weak often compels people to cling to their positions, reducing the likelihood of reaching constructive solutions.

The Impact of Inflated Ego on Apologies and Trust-Building

Apologizing requires humility, which individuals with an inflated ego often lack. This complicates disputes and prevents the formation of healthy long-term relationships. Arrogance and self-centeredness weaken trust between parties. People avoid engaging with arrogant individuals, making communication challenging and relationships fragile. An inflated ego also deteriorates long-term relationships, fostering an environment devoid of cooperation and hindering the sustainability of projects or future partnerships.

Ego from a Psychological Perspective

Psychologically, the ego can be understood through Freud's theory, which divides the psyche into the id, ego, and superego. In mediation, the ego can be seen as a tool for balancing basic instincts (id) and societal values (superego). Successful mediation requires this balance, allowing individuals to articulate their needs without encroaching on the rights of others.

Collective Ego and Its Impact on Societies

Beyond the individual ego, the "collective ego" also influences behavior and values within societies. As researcher Ibrahim Osei notes, the collective ego expands or contracts based on the general state of society—whether it is advancing or regressing. A strong collective ego, rooted in shared values and principles, fosters cohesion within a community. However, an inflated collective ego can lead to widespread conflicts, whether among groups or nations.

This phenomenon is evident in the behavior of leaders, business magnates, and warlords. In many instances, excessive ego has fueled wars and destroyed communities. In contrast, the superego is embodied in the actions of wise leaders and peacemakers who strive to uphold human dignity and build peace.

Challenges for Mediators When Dealing with Inflated Ego

As a mediator who has worked on dozens of cases across diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious contexts, I can confirm that inflated ego is consistently the most significant obstacle to reaching agreements. Those with inflated egos face a figurative "concrete wall" that prevents them from moving past their positions, even when their best interests lie elsewhere. Phrases like, "I cannot concede," "I never apologize," and "I am never wrong," are all too common.

Tools for Handling Inflated Ego in Mediation

1. Promoting Collaboration and Shared Interests

Highlighting mutual benefits can encourage cooperation. Sharing inspiring stories of respected individuals who made concessions and earned admiration can satisfy the need for recognition among those with inflated egos.

2. Reframing and Open-Ended Questions

Reframing situations from a different perspective and posing open-ended questions can foster reconsideration. This approach helps the mediator maintain control of the dialogue and guide discussions in a way that mitigates ego-driven resistance.

3. Ensuring Confidentiality

Encouraging individuals with inflated egos to make concessions by guaranteeing confidentiality in negotiations can be effective. Non-disclosure agreements may also be established to build trust.

Mediators are characterized by qualities such as tolerance, humility, self-respect, and respect for others. Their role necessitates selflessness, empowering disputing parties to take

ownership of the peace process. This critical role requires continuous personal development to combat arrogance and pride. Mediators must exhibit exceptional patience and wisdom when dealing with inflated egos. Overcoming this challenge fosters trust and enhances effective communication.

When the ego becomes amenable to reform, dialogue transforms into a collaborative process that achieves shared interests and strengthens relationships within the community.