

10

Dealing with conflict - 2 Should I ? Shouldn't I ?

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Story/Group work
Sheela's dilemma

Home activity
Worksheet 11
You choose . . .

Diary writing

Preparing for the session

This session deals with the conflict that arises within us because of a clash of ideas and values. One such situation of conflict is created through the story of Sheela. You have to read out the views of the different characters in the story. Do go through it and practise reading it in advance, to help you depict the personality of each character effectively while telling the story. After listening to the story, the class is expected to work in groups, analyse the dilemma faced by Sheela and suggest a solution. You will have to keep photocopies of the cue card ready for this purpose.

Main ideas

- Conflicts arise not only between two or more individuals or groups; they also arise within an individual.
- One reason for such dilemmas is that there are different ways of looking at an issue and therefore different opinions about the best course of action.
- While dealing with such conflicts the challenge is to approach it systematically. This means that we need to consider various options and weigh their implications before taking a decision.

To conduct the session you will need

- Set of eight picture cards : *Sheela's dilemma*
- Copies of cue card (one per group)
- Copies of Worksheet 11 (one per child)

Conducting the session

Activity 1

Story/

Group work

Sheela's dilemma

Introduce the session and the activity as follows :

In this session, you are going to meet a new friend. She is a little older than you are, and she needs your help. Her name is Sheela. You will first meet Sheela's family members and a neighbour. Sheela will then tell you about her problem. In this way, you will understand more about her and why she is looking for help.

Use the picture cards to tell the story.

Card 1 : Meet Sheela Patil

Sheela's family lives in Wardha, a small town of Maharashtra. Her family consists of her parents, grandfather, older brother and younger sister. Her father is a retired teacher. Her mother is also a teacher and has three more years before her retirement. Sheela's brother has just got a clerical job in a new factory that has opened in their town. Her sister is in college but is not very interested in studies.

Sheela has always been a hardworking and serious student and has completed her higher studies with the help of merit-based scholarships. She finished her graduation in computer technology about a year ago. It was a tough examination, conducted at the national level, and she did well in it. Since then she has been looking for a job that will do justice to her hard work and in which her qualifications will be well used. Unfortunately, in their small town there is no firm doing this kind of specialised work.

One day Sheela gets a letter offering her a job in a large and well-known computer company in Hyderabad. The letter says that she must attend a personal interview on a given date the following



week; if she does well at the interview, the job will be hers. She has to inform the company immediately about whether she can attend the interview.

This letter has led to a serious situation in the family, disturbing their otherwise peaceful household. It has also created a serious dilemma for Sheela.

Stop here for a brief discussion. Ask the class the following questions :

- Why do you think this has happened ?
- What should Sheela do ? Should she accept the opportunity she has been waiting for ?

Let the class respond to the questions, then tell them that they will now hear what the people close to Sheela have to say as well as her own point of view. They have to listen carefully to everyone's opinions and then suggest a way out. As you read out each person's view, the class should try to understand that person's opinion of what Sheela should do, his / her relationship with Sheela and the concerns that have led to such an opinion. Only after everyone's views have been heard should they try to help her.

Read out the remaining cards in sequence. While reading out each card, make sure you vary your tone and expression, so that the personality of the character is brought out.

Card 2 : Mr. Sharad Patil, Sheela's father

There is no question of her giving this interview. Arre, is this the only job available ? What will our relatives say ? What will my friends say ? She studied on her own merit; I did not have to spend too much money on her education otherwise I would never have been able to afford such an expensive course. I allowed her to look for a job just so that she would have something



to do until we found a good match for her. It's true that her salary will help us collect some money for her wedding, but there is no need to go to a strange city for that. People will say, "What a greedy father, sending a young daughter to a far off place to earn money. Chi, chi, I'll never allow it!"

Card 3 : Mrs. Laxmi Patil, Sheela's mother

I don't think Sheela has any choice except to listen to her father. He is right. It is unsafe for a young girl to live alone in a big city. Of course I do feel bad because I know how much she wants that job. It's true that she has studied hard and I'm proud of her. Not many girls get educated in our community but now things are changing and so we didn't stop her. Our relatives and neighbours kept warning us that something like this is going to happen.



Frankly, I'm very confused. Sometimes I feel that they are right. Then I remember how much I wanted to study further but my parents got me married as soon as I finished school. Of course I could complete my training and get a teacher's job because Sheela's father and my father-in-law supported me. Also a teacher's job is safe and I got a job in the same school where Sheela's father worked, so it was all right. But I hoped that my daughter would see her dreams come true.

It is not that Sheela's father is against her studies or her taking up a job. But he doesn't want her to go far away to a big city. It is unsafe for a single girl and there may be bad influences on her, who knows? Also, her living on her own, away from her family, will come in the way of her marriage. If it had been our son Sagar going away, we wouldn't have given two thoughts to it, but a daughter goes away only when she is married. There is no choice for Sheela but to listen to her father!

Card 4 : Aba, Sheela's grandfather

I cannot understand why Sharad is being so unreasonable and obstinate. He is more worried about what people will say. This is typical small town mentality! I think she should at least attend the interview. Today it is necessary for girls to stand on their own feet. As if marriage always brings happiness! Look at my daughter Sangita - I gave her all the opportunities but her in-laws are so conservative, she feels stifled in that house. They don't mind the fact that their son gets drunk regularly - on the contrary, they scold Sangita for protesting against this. I hope my granddaughters have a better future. What is wrong if Sheela wants to explore the option of taking up this job? It is a great opportunity for her. What if the job offer had been for Sagar, her brother? Everyone would have been only too proud and happy, na? But what is the point of saying all this? Who cares about an old man's opinions?

**Card 5 : Sagar Patil, Sheela's brother**

What a fuss everybody is making! Why don't people just mind their own business? Ever since this letter has come there has been no peace in our house. Everyone has a different opinion and everyone feels they are right! And my opinion? Nothing! Surprised? Honestly speaking, I have never been interested in studies and all that, and she has always been the bright one. After a long hunt I got this ordinary job and look at her - all her dreams are coming true. Do you know, I wanted to be a cricketer? I was an all-rounder. But my family never encouraged me. Just study, study, study! Whatever for? Now, Sheela has this great degree and even that is of no use to her.



But frankly, why should they let her do what she wants when I was never allowed to do what I wanted? They always spoil her just because she was good at studies. It's not fair. So I won't oppose it if she is allowed to go but I will certainly not go out of my way to help her.

Card 6 : Sushmita Patil, Sheela's sister

Nowadays, there is so much excitement in the house! I am hoping and praying that Tai is allowed to take up this job! I can then visit her in Hyderabad. If she gets accommodation, I can shift there and stay with her even! I have heard that Hyderabad is a nice city. I would love to stay on my own, have different friends. This town of ours is too boring. People here are so small-minded - they love to gossip about everyone just to pass the time. Look at our neighbours, the Jadhav family. Now they are busy discussing my sister's job offer as if it is their business! This town has always been like this and it seems as if nothing will ever change here. Please God, please let Baba allow Tai to go for the interview at least and please let me also go with her; it will be a wonderful change, even if it is only for a few days.



Card 7 : Mr. Jadhav, Sheela's neighbour

What nonsense! An unmarried young girl taking up a job in a strange, big city? Anyway, I suppose it had to happen sooner or later. Now if it had been Sagar going away, it would be different. Girls are girls after all; they should go away only when they are married off. What was the need to let her study after the Class 12? They should have married her off then only.



Card 8 : Sheela's dilemma

What am I to do ? Should I listen to my family or my heart ? If I behave like an obedient daughter, I'll lose this opportunity to make something of my life. If I go ahead and fulfill my dreams, I'll hurt my parents. Baba is absolutely against my going to Hyderabad even to attend the interview. And Aai never opposes him, she thinks he is always right - she will never speak her mind even if she thinks differently. I know they are worried about my safety and anxious about my marriage prospects. . .



Aba is really keen on me trying for this job, but nowadays Baba does not take Aba's advice. Sagar is very strange these days - he doesn't seem to be in favour of my going away either; must be worried for me, I guess. I wish I was like Sushmita ! If she had been given this opportunity, she would not think twice ! She would head straight for Hyderabad ! I wish Baba would at least let me try for the interview so that I know whether I am capable or not. Working hard and getting good marks is one thing but making an impression in an interview and actually getting the job is another ! We can always decide later, whether to accept the offer or not. But people like our neighbours, the Jadhavs, influence Baba a great deal. What will people say ? What will the community say ? He is constantly worried about that. I wish Baba would see my point of view rather than Jadhav kaka's ! I really can't understand what should I be doing ! Is there no solution that will make everybody happy and satisfy me as well ?

After you have read out all the cards, make the following points.

The situation Sheela and her family are facing is a typical example of a conflict arising from different points of view. There is no obvious fight or confrontation (or even an unpleasant argument). No one is against another person as such. But everybody thinks that their point of view is the only correct one and those who disagree with them are wrong.

Sheela is at the centre of this crisis, she is aware of these differing opinions and expectations and as a result she is facing a conflict within herself. What can she do? What will happen if she chooses to go for the interview against her parents wishes? What if she listens to them and does not go? Is there any solution that will make everybody happy? This is where she needs your help. You have to work in groups and discuss these questions, in order to help Sheela deal effectively with the conflict she is facing.

Divide the class into groups of equal number. Do see to it that each group is a mixed one - that it contains a near equal number of girls and boys, that it has a reasonable proportion of quiet as well as vocal children and that it has a sufficient number of children with good reading-writing skills. Give each group a copy of the cue card.

Give the groups about 10-15 minutes to discuss and jot down their responses. Then ask one representative from each group to come forward and present their responses. At the end of each presentation the other groups can ask for clarifications or offer their opinions. After all groups have made presentations, conclude the activity.

Sheela's Dilemma

You have just heard the story of Sheela Patil. You have heard how the different people around her - her parents, grandfather, brother, sister and neighbour - have their own opinions about what she should do.

Keep Sheela's story in mind and answer the following questions. Discuss each question in your group, listen to each other and then write down the group's answer. After you have answered all the questions, choose a representative to present your answers to the rest of the class.

- Is Sheela in a situation of conflict? What is the conflict here?
- What is the main problem?
- Who is affected by this situation?
- Who are the people who want Sheela to take up the job? What are their reasons?

- Who are the people who do not want Sheela to take up this job ?
What are their reasons ?
- What does Sheela herself want to do ?
- What are the different ways in which the conflict can be resolved ?
- What do you think Sheela should do ?
- What will happen if she decides to follow your advice ?
- Who will be happy if she takes this route ?
Who will be unhappy ?
- How will Sheela deal with the unhappiness or displeasure of those who do not approve of her decision ?

Summing up

Conclude the session by making the following points.

Some conflicts are easier to resolve than others. This is also true of the dilemmas or inner conflicts that we face. We may be confused about what to do because different people look at situations differently. But whatever the dilemma, it is important to approach it in a systematic manner rather than to get weighed down by the external and internal pressures on us. This is a skill that we can develop with practice; that is exactly what we tried to do in the last activity. The activity showed us that we must face such situations by weighing the different options, by thinking about the implications of the choices before us, and then deciding on what we think is the most appropriate one.

In the next session we will learn more about how best we can deal with conflicts and the emotions they arouse in us.

Home activity

Worksheet 11

You choose . . .

Diary writing

Distribute copies of Worksheet 11 to the class. They have to read the story, answer the questions given and file it in their personal folders.

Tell the class to record in their diary, instances of when they have been in a dilemma because of conflicting advice given by different people and how they resolved these situations.