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BLOCK 3 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In the previous Block we learned about positive psychology, that is understanding of self, emotion and well being, promoting well being and positive promoting. In this block “Interpersonal Relationships”, we shall deal with various concepts and aspects related to interpersonal relationships. The Block consists of four Units.

Unit 10 is entitled “Cohesiveness, Adaptation and Resilience”. As the name suggests, it deals with cohesiveness in family and the adaptation and resilience processes in the family. The Unit begins with the introduction of cohesiveness which includes features of Indian families and forms of cohesiveness as well as various barriers and challenges to family cohesiveness. Nature of conflicts and their effects on the family cohesion have also been described. Further, important strategies to resolve the conflicts in family are discussed. At the end, the Unit explains the resilience and adaptation processes in the family.

Unit 11 is “Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution”. The concept of problem solving is explained in the beginning of this Unit. Further, the Unit defines the conflict, explain various forms of conflicts, discusses different characteristics of family conflict and types of family conflicts. Common sources of conflicts are also mentioned in this Unit, such as communication problem, children sexual problem, work and employment problem, financial problems and decision making. Gesture exchange, period of conflict, accommodation, reassessment, aftermath are the stages of marital conflicts. Further, the Unit deals with conflict management which also known as conflict resolution. Role induction and role modification are the techniques of dealing with conflicts. Positive approach to conflict management or coping strategies are also described. Conflict resolution process includes awareness, setting limits, arguing, negotiating and the following up, and has been explained at the end of this Unit.

Unit 12 is about “Interpersonal Communication”. The Unit begins with the definition of communication and the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication. Further, the Unit defines interpersonal communication and elaborates on two news on interpersonal communication competence, including characteristics and strategies for communication competence. Non-verbal communication is also defined in this Unit along with the general principles, functions and elements of non-verbal communication. Johari Window and Knapp’s Relationship Escalation model are two models of interpersonal communication which are explained if this Unit. The Unit also deals with more effective communication which includes communication skills, effective communication which includes communication skills, effective listening, forms of listening and pointers for effective listening, the end of this Unit, the barriers to effective communication are discussed.

Unit 13 is on “Interface between Family and Workplace”. Describes linkages between family and workplace include decisions and choices related to careers and work and rising nature of women, education and employment. The Unit explain how work life impact family life such as work impacting personal life decisions, work spilling over family life, work-family conflict and related stress, and various changes at work front that influence the family. Family life also influences the work which is well explained in this Unit. Variations in family forms and its influence on work life, and effective family-work balance have also been discussed in the Unit.

UNIT 10 COHESIVENESS, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Cohesiveness
 - 10.2.1 Features of Indian Families and Forms of Cohesiveness
 - 10.2.2 Barriers and Challenges to Family Cohesiveness
- 10.3 Nature of Conflicts and their Effects on the Family Cohesiveness
 - 10.3.1 Chronic Conflicts
 - 10.3.2 Episodic Conflicts
- 10.4 Resolution of Conflicts: Important Strategies
- 10.5 Resilience and Adaptation
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Glossary
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 10.9 Unit End Questions
- 10.10 Further Readings and References

10.1 INTRODUCTION

We all know about the significance of communication in the family. In many ways, the nature and quality of communication in a family becomes the foundation of emotional closeness. This is because individuals express themselves and their intentions by communicating (or choosing not to communicate!) with others. Now let us understand other cumulative family processes like cohesion. When you look around carefully in our society, you will observe that some families or couples display understanding and close emotional bonds while others do not. In greater or lesser proportions, all families – irrespective of size or form – have the potential to be cohesive, show resilience and adapt to stressful or novel situations.

In the contemporary context, the Indian family displays an intricate mix of tradition and modernity. Open to many confluences, it has undergone a sea change due to rapid urbanisation and globalisation. The roles and responsibilities of family members or groups (parents, women or children) have changed dramatically, throwing up many unforeseen challenges in family life. Now, individuals and families are constantly adapting to ever-changing environments and stressful circumstances. In spite of these structural and functional changes, some basic processes like family cohesion have remained firmly rooted in interdependent cultural values. To sustain individual well being and supportive social-familial networks, individuals and groups need to be resilient and use effective coping strategies to overcome crises or challenges successfully. Ensuring happiness in familial ties requires consistent input from all individuals in the family. The Unit attempts to outline some of these factors and explains the processes of cohesiveness, adaptation and resilience in families.

The Unit focuses on processes of family cohesion within Indian families. The nature of family cohesion in Indian families is discussed with the help of factors (structural, functional and psychosocial) which contribute to its maintenance or destruction. Further, the Unit describes processes of adaptation at an individual and spousal level. The Unit highlights some circumstances which pose chronic or intermittent challenges to individual and familial well being. Then, concepts of resilience and adaptation are explained to identify coping strategies that may work effectively for the individual, within the spousal relationship or for the family at large. Overall, the Unit elaborates the significance of family cohesiveness and resilience in times of adversity and demarcates individual and familial factors that will enable successful adaptation.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand concepts of family cohesion, adaptation and resilience as processes determining the quality of family life;
- Develop an objective and realistic understanding of different life circumstances where individuals and families need to adapt and demonstrate resilience; and
- Identify effective coping strategies that can strengthen individuals and families to overcome stress and other barriers to a fulfilling family life.

10.2 COHESIVENESS

Across social class, caste, community and religion, family remains the strongest social institution in India, enabling individuals to assimilate with society (Beteille, 1993). Family thus becomes the most powerful “in group” for Indians, commanding loyalty, priority and respect. Togetherness and unity in the family is thus highly valued in the Indian context. The joint family in India has remained an idealised norm from ancient times. However, sociologists disagree when the joint family is projected as the prototypical Indian family (Patel, 2005). This is because there is now enough evidence to show that joint families in India were a norm only for the urban, business classes. Most other groups preferred living in nuclear or smaller, extended families (Uberoi, 1993). Whatever the family type and form, cohesiveness is a significant family process.

10.2.1 Features of Indian Families and Forms of Cohesiveness

The position and relation of each family member to others in the Indian family determines their roles. Specific etiquettes and codes of proper conduct are attached to each role within the larger kinship network. A complete understanding of the ‘joint-ness’ of a family can be had only if all familial relationships are considered (Shah, 1998). The emotional aspects of family life should be understood with respect to all relationships in the family and the dynamics they create. The immediate family (consisting of parents and children) and the wider kin network are interconnected and processes of cohesiveness are significant for both. However, cohesiveness can take diverse forms and is dependent on the quality of input from individual family members.

Many questions come to our mind when we think of family structure (joint, nuclear, extended etc.) and cohesion among family members. Is family cohabitation

(living together) a prerequisite for cohesion? Are joint families more cohesive than nuclear ones? What about families that stay together but are not united? Will there be a need to redefine cohesion in the new and alternative family forms?

Let us understand this complexity with the help of a few examples.

- Mr. X's family consists of his wife and three children. His daughter, pursuing her postgraduate education stays with them, while one of his sons is settled in another city. The eldest son stays abroad with his family. Mr. X has many relatives who stay in the same city. His family is very "close knit" and in spite of distances, most decisions are taken in consultation with one another. When it was time to buy a new house for the family, Mr. X consulted his children as well as other elderly members in the extended family. Even in future, the consent of the larger family will matter when his daughter decides to choose a partner. In times of emergency, individual family members rush to each others' assistance, even at short notice. Depending on their requirements, financial burdens are shared equally by Mr. X and his sons. His wife, daughter and daughters-in-law also contribute to the family income or the maintenance of the household from time to time.

As seen from the above example, family cohesion depends more on emotional bonds and concern for each other than cohabitation. Family cohesion also results from being sensitive to the needs of other family members and an equitable sharing of financial as well as emotional resources. Each family member is cognizant of her or his roles and responsibilities, making the transfer of individual rights a natural rather than a contested process. In this case, family cohesion includes the concept of giving 'space' to individuals which in turn ensures smooth family living.

- Mr. Y lives with two of his brothers and their respective families. His elderly parents also stay with them. The family is three generational with a set of grandparents, parents and grand children. They pool their financial resources to meet operative costs and other needs. But discrimination on the basis of unequal incomes (of the brothers) makes the family a site of contestation for power, authority and resource sharing. The sub set of families contributing more to the family pool assert their dominance over other dependent members. In this case, in spite of staying together, most members do not get along with the others. The atmosphere thus created is not congenial, leading to frequent arguments and conflicts between the brothers and their wives. Children are exposed to such events on an everyday basis. While staying together may reduce financial costs, family disharmony negatively affects the development of all members.

It is evident that just living together or sharing resources does not guarantee family cohesion. There is a need to understand family cohesion as a collaborative process which requires input from all family members. Inequality in the family breeds discontent not just materially but also psychosocially. Discrimination on the basis of income, gender or other factors adversely affects the overall well being of the family. It is assumed that there are more hands to share work in bigger families, which contributes to its cohesion. But, possibilities of some people working most of the times and others never cannot be denied. In such cases, role confusion, insufficient appreciation and discontent at an individual level can hamper family cohesion. Similarly, women end up doing most of the household chores in many nuclear families. So, even if the family size is small, one cannot avoid undue stress

and dissatisfaction in the long run. In such cases, low value associated with household work contributes to gender inequality on an everyday basis and reproduces it.

We can thus conclude that family cohesion can take diverse forms in the contemporary Indian family. Family cohesion is a dynamic process. Sometimes, with a change in circumstances, families can become more or less cohesive (for example, death of a family member or parent). The collaborative process of family cohesion depends primarily on individuals' commitment to the family and their understanding of socio-familial responsibilities than on static aspects like family size, structure or co-habitation.

Now, let us examine some barriers that could hamper family cohesiveness.

10.2.2 Barriers and Challenges to Family Cohesiveness

When the personal goals of individual members are in conflict with the larger, collective familial goals, family cohesiveness can come under threat. When the priorities of individual family members are aligned only to personal achievements, maintaining cohesiveness can be difficult. In line with this, inappropriate perception of rights and duties as well as differences in values and lifestyles can reflect in behaviour and contribute to ongoing tensions. In some situations, demands at other fronts like the workplace can induce individual level stress and inappropriate handling of the same can adversely affect family cohesion. Let us understand this with the help of some examples.

- Mr. K lives with his only son and wife. His son has a degree in engineering and wants to go abroad for further studies. Mr. K takes an education loan so that his son can pursue higher education at a foreign university. After a few years, his son decides to settle abroad instead of coming back to India and staying with his now retired parents. He wants to focus on his achievements in the formative years of his career. Mr. K expects his son to come back and stay with them, but does not want to obstruct his son's progress. He feels his son has failed to acknowledge their inputs in his life and has not considered the difficulties they might face by staying alone in their old age. Viewing their lives in retrospect, Mr. K and his wife are dissatisfied, having sacrificed many things in order to ensure a better life for their son. In the traditional Indian framework, parental expectations and duties of children complemented each other, leading to smoother passage to the last phases of the family life cycle. In the contemporary scenario, this has changed and an interdependent model of family life is no more a norm. In order to sustain cordial relations in the family, the older generation will have to alter its expectations and adapt to the challenges of surviving alone in their old age. They become psychologically vulnerable when a negative evaluation of their past affects their self-esteem. Factors like international migration, in this case, pit the aspirations of individuals in two different life stages at cross-purposes.

Let us examine another situation. Initial years of marriage in traditional Indian families can be fraught with challenges. Marriage, a significant life event in India, strongly influences women's identities and changes the dynamics within a family. Traditional expectations would demand adjustments only from a woman (daughter-in-law), who is the new member so that she assimilates with the conjugal family and adopts their everyday practices. Ideally, a lucid transition of families to life after marriage demands adjustments not just from the spouses but also from other family members. However, the situation is quite different in real life. If the daughter-

in-law has always lived in a nuclear family and values independence, the initial years of marriage in a bigger, extended family can be challenging. The spouses may disagree on many issues due to differences in their upbringing and or the clash of values. For example, having the family meal together may be a valued practice for the husband (and his family) whereas the wife may value her privacy and occasionally desire to dine out with him. Such incidents may not be accepted or appreciated by other members of the family. The daughter-in-law becomes the source of undesirable changes in the family. Accommodating the views of other family members could induce stress in the spousal relationship. Such situations lead individual family members to form rigid impressions about one another, typecasting their responses in future and fuelling more conflicts.

From the above examples, we can infer that family cohesion can come under stress at certain times in the family life cycle (like marriage of children, children leaving home, death or prolonged illness of family members) and require adaptation to new members or circumstances. If the adaptations or adjustments are not well planned, cohesion may be endangered. This could result in unpleasant interpersonal relationships that turn into conflicts even on a day-to-day basis.

Let us now go over to the next section to discuss the nature of conflicts within the family and how they affect cohesiveness.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. What is family cohesion?

.....

.....

.....

2. What are the features of Indian families that affect cohesion?

.....

.....

.....

3. What are some of the barriers to family cohesion?

.....

.....

.....

10.3 NATURE OF CONFLICTS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY COHESIVENESS

Conflicts could be understood as any undesirable effects or implications of a problem or an issue that needs to be resolved (Vuchinich, 1999). Conflicts within

the family could take place on repeated, intermittent basis or spontaneously, in episodes due to some sudden turn of events.

10.3.1 Chronic Conflicts

Some conflicts are chronic and could occur repeatedly due to unresolved issues. Every time the issue appears, the conflict is bound to follow. For example, in a dual-earner family if the spouses don't agree on the division of household chores, the husband or the wife may have frequent arguments about who should do what and why. As both spouses lead a stressful work life, managing time efficiently would be a priority and the traditional, gendered division of labour will be too rigid a framework to follow. This may result into a chain of frequent conflicts and dissatisfaction with one's role and status in the family. Unless the spouses agree on dividing the chores equitably or find alternatives, the issue will not be resolved.

Features of Chronic Conflicts

Let us now understand some features of chronic conflicts in a family.

- **Chronic conflicts are predictable:** Members involved in a chronic conflict can predict not only its occurrence but also behavioural responses of other members involved in it. Depending on the issue, chronic conflicts involve specific members of the family. For example, chronic conflicts related to preparing meals for the family are more likely to involve people who prepare food (often women of the family) and those members who are fussy about their food choices. In some cases, women preparing meals may be involved in chronic conflicts because their styles of cooking do not match! In both cases, members uninvolved in the issues may remain at the peripheries.
- **Chronic conflicts multiply everyday stress:** Such conflicts become a part of everyday life and compliment other stressors like the lack of time or fatigue due to pressures at the work place. They create a vicious cycle of conflicts and re-emergence of issues.
- **Significant issues (underlying these conflicts) cut across situations:** Many times, some very basic issues are buried underneath the frequently occurring conflicts. Some of these issues are unfairness or its perception, power hierarchy and inequality, rigidity *versus* flexibility in individual behaviour and the like which can be applied to other familial situations also and every time, they may or may not culminate in a conflict. In some contexts and situations, individuals may not be able to revolt whereas in some relationships they may have scope to voice their disapproval.
- **Chronic Conflicts can turn serious:** Many chronic conflicts can take a serious turn and result in physical or mental abuse. It could have severe implications on the mental health of the persons involved due to recurrent events that lead to a multitude of conflicts. Handling these conflicts and dealing with their consequences could then make or break a family.
- **There is limited scope for individual reflection:** The frequency of chronic conflicts interferes with everyday life and does not allow individual family members to reflect on their or others' behaviours objectively. Unless all members are determined and motivated to resolve the conflict, the vicious cycle of typecasting each other's responses cannot be broken. Thus, it is very difficult to think of alternative solutions to the problem or worse still, even identify factors which create the conflict.

10.3.2 Episodic Conflicts

Some other conflicts are episodic and occur sporadically or occasionally. The reasons for such conflicts could be some special circumstances or events that do not happen regularly. For example, a financial crisis due to loss in business or a sudden loss of job may result in rampant accusations of improper planning for the future or uncalculated risk taking among family members. The sudden lack of resources and the need to resurrect living standards as they were in the past are major challenges in this case. Family members will have to adapt to novel situations and adjust to the loss of social prestige or good will.

Features of Episodic Conflicts

Let us examine some features of episodic conflicts.

- **Episodic conflicts can be turning points (for better or worse):** When individual members reflect on episodic conflicts, discuss them and are committed to resolve them (either individually or as a team), these events can become turning points and reinstate family cohesion. In cases otherwise, family cohesion will take a downhill road and emotional closeness among the members may never reach the previous or desired level again.
- **Episodic conflicts may disappear once circumstances become favourable:** Taking off from the above example of financial crisis, if the financial situation improves, there would be no contest for limited resources and hence the episodic conflicts may also recede. However, this could happen only if the cause of the conflict is prominently situational than person-centered. If strong situational influences (like lack of money or other resources, illness of a family member, geographical distances etc.) force individuals to express dissatisfaction explicitly (but inappropriately), conflicts could occur. Once the situational constraints fade away, the episodes of conflict may also disappear.
- **With frequent occurrences, episodic conflicts could become chronic in nature:** Many a time, inappropriate resolution of episodic conflicts could result in these conflicts becoming chronic. If families can identify and resolve the issues creating problems, then they can avoid episodic conflicts from becoming chronic. The lack of commitment to this end could lead to more episodes of conflict or episodic conflicts taking on a chronic nature.
- **Individual members have scope to reflect on them:** In case of episodic conflicts, individual members have the time and scope to reflect on their own behaviour as well as that of others. They can scrutinize the causes of the conflict at length and think of strategies to avoid such incidents in future. They can interpret the conflict in new light with passage of time and change their stance in future to avoid conflicts. Spouses who are still in the process of knowing each other can figure out what aspects of a situation are not appreciated by the other and keep checks on their own behaviour. For example, if the wife values her 'personal space' then the husband, rather than imposing his ideas of family routine, should acknowledge the time she will spend on her interests. Similarly, if the wife knows that the husband appreciates keeping track of family expenses in order to save more, she may decide to keep accounts at regular intervals.

You would now be familiar with the features of conflicts and would be able to classify them as well. So, let us examine some strategies to resolve family

conflicts in the next section. You may need to refer back to some examples given in the previous sections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. What are conflicts? Mention the types of conflicts.

.....

2. How are chronic conflicts different from episodic conflicts?

.....

3. What are some strategies to resolve family conflicts effectively?

.....

10.4 RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS: IMPORTANT STRATEGIES

We shall now discuss some important strategies to resolve conflicts with the help of corresponding examples.

- **Keeping Communication Channels Open**

When some family members disagree with others, it is necessary for them to sit and discuss the matter calmly. Instead of arguing aggressively or talking in each others' absence, it is important that family members resolve the issue at hand with open minds. If a father and his adolescent son have disagreements about the amount of money the son spends, they should talk about the problem. Instead of commenting on how irresponsible the son is or how much the father nags, they should clarify which behaviours the other disapproves of, why and what could they possibly do to avoid disagreements. So one of the solutions could be that the son decides to spend less on entertainment and agrees to take a fixed amount of pocket money from his father. The father also understands the son's need to spend on some things and decides, in consultation with the son, a realistic budget for his monthly pocket money. Alternatively, the son could be encouraged to get a part time job and create his own pocket money!

- **Creating an Atmosphere of Trust and Belongingness**

Family closeness and emotional stability rest upon a strong foundation of trust among family members. If all members get a feeling of belongingness to the family, they would easily think about familial benefits, rather than only personal gains. In a spousal relationship, it is imperative that both husband and wife trust each other. If there are instances where the husband or the wife doubts each other's intentions or actions or try to control each other, an element of unnecessary answerability is introduced in the relationship. At times, this may seem restrictive or pressurising to the partner. Hence, the

chances of hiding something (by presupposing that the other will not like it), may increase. Based on their level of trust, the couple will be able to create a feeling of belongingness to one another and the larger family.

- **Evaluating Situations and Opinions Objectively**

If episodes of conflict are discussed, family members must be able to evaluate the situation of conflict and their own behaviours objectively. Taking a prejudiced or person-centric view will not help in any way. For example, in a step family, there are frequent conflicts between the father and his adolescent step-daughter. These conflicts often end in angry, verbal duels between them. He believes that his step-daughter is not concentrating enough on her studies because she keeps bad company. Evaluating the situation objectively would mean the father considers his own behaviour towards the step-daughter and whether he can avoid shouting at her. Is there a better, calmer approach to the situation than what is currently being used? He may also want to consider the daughter's age, her needs and level of comfort within the family (especially with a step-father being considered "an outsider") rather than holding an opinion that the daughter has no intentions of studying. If the father opens up in front of the daughter, she too may perceive his behaviour in positive light and gradually begin to evaluate her behaviour towards him (or her attitude to academics) without a bias.

- **Creating Realistic and Achievable Alternatives**

Instead of trying to achieve the 'ideal', it is sometimes better to think of workable and realistic alternatives to resolve conflicts. Many conflicts occur because notions of the 'ideal' with respect to behaviours and corresponding roles differ significantly among people. Similarly, instead of disliking or trying to change everything about a person, it might be fruitful to negotiate small behavioural changes. With this approach, the alternatives will be achievable and lead to less frustration. For example, if the wife values neatness in the house, the husband can make efforts to change some of his behaviours by say, putting things in their proper place or clearing up after the task at hand is over. As the wife begins to notice this change in the husband's behaviour, she may want to appreciate it. Both spouses are then moving towards common goals.

Individuals must be flexible and ready to accommodate views of other people in their schema. Cohesiveness in the family cannot be guaranteed without support and openness of all family members. Family members may have to rethink their roles and let go of false pride to facilitate smooth family living. This seems easier said than done in real life and requires adjustment on the part of all involved members.

Apart from cohesion, processes of resilience and adaptation are important to deal with challenges in family life. Let us now examine these processes in families.

10.5 RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

As family processes, adaptation and resilience go hand in hand. Family cohesion is an overarching process that can include resilience and adaptation. The quality of cohesion in the family may change for better or worse, depending on successful or failed adaptation. The ability to adapt is closely linked with resilience, which refers to the capacity to withstand stressful and challenging circumstances and essentially operates within the individual. Resilience as a process thus applies

more to individuals than groups or families. A group of resilient individuals, who overcome challenging situations, can become a resilient family. There could be individual differences in the degree of resilience and use of strategies to deal with crises or challenges. Resilience can also be explained as the capacity of individuals to “stretch” themselves or their qualities in response to stressful situations, without breaking up or damaging their physical and mental health. More the resilience, better the ability to adapt.

The expression of resilience to others depends on individual psychological factors and available social support. Many individuals may be able to develop new coping skills while showing resistance and use these newly acquired skills or behaviour patterns later in life. So if a couple has coped successfully with stressful financial conditions in the early years of marriage, they will be able to use these skills of money / resource management when they plan their child’s education or their retirement.

Resilience is a prerequisite for individuals and families to adapt successfully. If the level of resilience is low or impaired, then coping with stressful situations becomes difficult. This results in an inability to adapt and feelings of worthlessness or depression. Let us understand resilience as a process with the help of a few examples.

- Ms. Y is a single mother and lives in a one room apartment with her son and daughter. She works as a nurse in a nearby private hospital. With great difficulty she tries to make ends meet and send her children to school. Her job hours are not fixed and many times she has to do two shifts in a row, to provide for the family. One day, she hears that this hospital is to be closed down soon as the doctor plans to migrate abroad. In a week’s time, she is asked to find a new job. Ms. Y is extremely worried about the future of her family. She has no social support to fall back on. After initial shock, she reviews her situation realistically and evaluates the resources she has to her disposal. She comes up with some possible solutions. Although the near future is going to be tougher than the present, she has not given up on life! She plans to train her son (elder) to take care of the younger sister after school and also help her with some chores at home. She plans to give up the nursing profession for some time and decides to open a catering business that she can operate from home. So she identifies people who need food to be delivered at their homes. Her son assists her as a delivery boy after school. She also tutors children in the evenings. Ms. Y understood that it was important for her to operate from home and use two or three jobs with flexible working hours in order to adapt to the situation. So, she may have to work harder and longer, but some of her basic needs are taken care of. Her values of optimism, independence and self-respect give her strength to battle against all odds in life.

There might be times when individuals and families have to show resilience for a long period of time and keep adapting to new circumstances. These situations can become highly stressful, for example, having a child with special needs (any type of disability or impairment) at home can produce long term stress in the lives of parents. They have to be resilient and meet this challenge to sustain a stable family life. Breakdowns in resilience will result in failed adaptations. Resilience and adaptation are thus twin processes fueling each other and enabling the individual or family to survive diverse situations. Now let us understand adaptation as a process.

Adaptation is a conscious, reactionary process enabling the individual to acclimatize with changes and new circumstances in the environment so that they can either sustain previously used behaviours or devise newer, more efficient behaviours to successfully deal with environmental challenges. Adaptation is essentially an intra psychic process, but when applied to families, many individual members (together) may need to adapt to unfamiliar situations that affect them. Their capacity to adapt and conquer new situations may vary greatly. If families are highly cohesive, members with more adaptive capacity may support others to adapt as well. In case of families with low or moderate cohesion, adaptation to crises or new challenges becomes a difficult process and only some individual members will be able to achieve successful adaptation.

Conflicts in the family play an important role in enabling the family to adapt. Conflicts that are mild in nature and periodic in occurrence such as minor, everyday disagreements between parents and their adolescent children or spouses are constructive (Acock & Demo, 1994). These events prepare families to know each other's behaviour mechanisms and adjust or negotiate accordingly. On an everyday basis, the family or its members constantly adapt to each other and hence know each others' strengths and weaknesses.

Families where members are vocal about their needs and get freedom to express their views comfortably are more adaptive. On the other hand, the atmosphere of low adaptive families is inhibitive and members fear each other's reactions. Most of their behaviour is in anticipation of what others might think or prefer. Communication in such families is indirect and often ineffective.

Leadership is another feature of families that adapt well. If the family has a good leader who takes everyone's views into account, it has good chances of adapting successfully to challenges. The leader may not necessarily be the head of the family (normally, men). Leadership qualities may also be displayed by other emotionally stronger members of the family. These members can provide or generate the necessary "glue" to bind the family together in times of adversity. Although normatively Indian families are headed by men, leadership qualities may be expressed by other member irrespective of gender or familial position. So, there could be a young son who can lead the family to overcome a financial crisis or a single mother who prepares and inspires other members to meet the challenges bravely. Individuals from the low socio-economic status, where physical-material resources are scarce, display more adaptive capacity (Khasgiwala, 1993). In poorer families, children also contribute to the family income and can possess various leadership skills and maturity beyond their years. Many times people outside the family may support the adaptive process, like friends or colleagues who understand and respond to the needs of such families. For example, if a slum is razed to make way for a new building, families living in that slum will have to look for new living arrangements. If friends of a particular family know similar other slums where accommodation is available, then family may be able to relocate smoothly. In case of migration from rural to urban areas, some helpful acquaintances in the city may help new, migrant families settle down by providing temporary living spaces and orienting them to life in a big city.

Individuals and families need to adapt not just to crises or difficult situations but also to some life cycle needs. Individuals need to respond to changes in the environment due to marriage (new spousal and conjugal relationships), retirement, birth of children or the illness or death of family members. Well functioning families adapt smoothly to life cycle needs and maintain flexible boundaries to include or exclude members (Zeitlin, Megawangi, Kramer, Colletta, Babatunde & Garman, 1995). Both physical and psychological preparations, before the life cycle changes

occur, help families to make smoother transitions. For example, if life after retirement is well-planned, financially, socially and psychologically, elderly members of the family will experience successful aging.

Let us look at another example to understand adaptation in couple relationships.

- Ms. A and Mr. B met in college and decided to cohabit before entering the institution of marriage. In the initial phases, they experienced new found companionship and intimacy. But with the passage of time, Ms. A realised that Mr. B was unable to appreciate her independent life style and subscribed to an unequal, hierarchical couple relationship. He would demand money from her to meet his personal expenses and held her responsible for much of the household chores. They got into arguments regularly and one day it resulted in Ms. A being abused psychologically and physically. Ms. A realised that she was unhappy in this relationship but moving out of it would have immense emotional and social repercussions. At the same time, staying on would be self-destructive. Eventually, after much negotiation and legal help, she walks out of the relationship and starts life afresh. She moves back with her parents for emotional security, finds a job and starts rebuilding her social life by making new friends. She decides to take some time before entering in any new relationship.

Thus, processes of adaptation are occurring continuously before and after the dissolution of a significant relationship in adulthood. But a realistic evaluation of situations and one's life goals can help immensely. The process of adaptation thus becomes the vehicle for a well-thought out future.

With these examples, we understand that adaptation can take a long time before life normalises again. It can also be a very stressful period requiring constant display of resilience on part of individuals or families. But at the end, resilient individuals and families emerge victorious. They find new strengths to conquer situational factors and develop as mature individuals.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. What is resilience?

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2. What is adaptation?

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have examined the interrelated processes of family cohesion, adaptation and resilience. All the processes involve both individual and family level mechanisms. Family cohesion requires collaborated inputs from all family members but adaptation and resilience could vary individually. When adaptation and resilience occur at group or family level, cohesion becomes a prerequisite. Different individuals will have different styles of displaying or understanding cohesion, adaptation and

resilience. It is important to identify many other underlying factors that influence these family processes, besides the static ones like family type, size, and composition. Importantly, every family will have a unique style of dealing with challenges around them and it becomes important for a therapist to know the strengths and weaknesses of the family as well as its members to give any input.

10.7 GLOSSARY

Cohesion	: Closeness, unity and harmony
Adaptation	: Effective coping with changes in the environment; adjustment in self and families.
Resilience	: Capacity to withstand stressful and challenging circumstances.
Barriers	: Hindrances, obstacles.
Conflicts	: Disagreements and arguments, clashes.
Chronic	: Occuring repeatedly.
Episodic	: In episodes or phases, circumstantial happening.

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Family cohesion is a dynamic and collaborative process that depends primarily on individual members' commitment and understanding of their socio-familial responsibilities to make the family a unified and harmoniously functioning unit in society.
- 2) Features of Indian families that affect cohesion are its structure, functions of individual members, emotional closeness that they experience and sensitivity to others' needs.
- 3) Barriers to family cohesion can be unequal distribution of resources, discrimination among members, insufficient appreciation of their roles and inappropriate perception of rights and duties by individual members.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Conflicts are the undesirable effects or implications of a problem or an issue that needs to be resolved. Conflicts within the family could take place on repeated, intermittent basis or spontaneously, in episodes due to some sudden turn of events. Conflicts could be chronic or episodic in nature.
- 2) Chronic conflicts keep re-occurring and remain largely unresolved. They are predictable, multiply everyday stress and can turn into serious issues within the family. Unless individual members resolve to sort it out, there is limited scope for individual reflection in chronic conflicts. On the other hand, episodic conflicts are circumstantial. They occur because there is a change in familial or individual circumstances. They can change (for better or worse) with time or can become chronic. Individual members can reflect on the changes in the family circumstances that surround the conflict and deal with them effectively.
- 3) Some strategies to resolve conflicts are keeping communication channels open, creating an atmosphere of trust and belongingness, evaluating situations and opinions objectively and creating realistic and achievable alternatives.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Resilience refers to the capacity to withstand stressful and challenging circumstances and essentially operates within the individual. Resilience can also be explained as the capacity of individuals to “stretch” themselves or their qualities in response to stressful situations, without breaking up or damaging their physical and mental health.
- 2) Adaptation is a conscious, reactionary process enabling the individual to acclimatize with changes and new circumstances in the environment so that they can either sustain previously used behaviours or devise newer, more efficient behaviours to successfully deal with environmental challenges. Adaptation is essentially an intra-psychic process, but when applied to families, many individual members (together) may need to adapt to unfamiliar situations that affect them.

10.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) How are the processes of family cohesion, adaptation and resilience inter-related?
- 2) With the help of examples, explain which factors influence cohesion and adaptation.
- 3) What could happen if families or individuals lack resilience? How can these families or individuals be helped to adapt or build their capacities to be resilient?
- 4) Identify factors in families which contribute to conflicts / disagreements. With the help of examples, explain how families can resolve some conflicts.
- 5) Identify resources in your locality which can help families in difficult circumstances.

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UNIT 11 PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Concept of Problem Solving
- 11.3 Conflict
 - 11.3.1 Concept of Conflict
 - 11.3.2 Forms of Conflict
 - 11.3.3 Characteristics of Family Conflict
 - 11.3.4 Types of Family Conflicts
- 11.4 Common Sources of Conflicts
 - 11.4.1 Communication Problems
 - 11.4.2 Problems Related to Children
 - 11.4.3 Sexual Problems
 - 11.4.4 Work and Employment Problems
 - 11.4.5 Financial Problems
 - 11.4.6 Decision Making
- 11.5 Stages of Marital Conflict
 - 11.5.1 Gesture Exchange
 - 11.5.2 Period of Conflict
 - 11.5.3 Accomodation
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- 11.6 Conflict Management/Conflict Resolution
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- 11.14 Further Readings and References

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Family problems are conditions that block the attainment of individual or family goals. These conditions may include behaviours, rules, expectations, attitudes, relationships, social structures, action patterns, or circumstances external to the family. Family problem solving is the removal of conditions that block the attainment of a family based goal.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Define the concepts of problem solving, and conflict, conflict resolution; (basic, non-basic, situational, personal conflicts);
- Describe the forms of conflict, characteristics of family conflicts, types of family conflicts, sources of conflict, stages of marital conflict etc; and
- Explain the concept of conflict resolution process, techniques and coping of strategies conflict management etc.

11.2 CONCEPT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

When you feel confused, concerned, upset or oppressed – these are signs of problem.

Strong families develop ways to approach and solve problems. Early identification of the problem is very important, that is before problems become harder to solve. How can you handle a problem that seems overwhelming?

Most family problem solving occurs in the ebb and flow (rise and fall) of daily family events. It depends on the family dynamics, that is different situations, circumstances, problem type etc.

For any problem solving in a family or outside home, identification of problem has to be done followed by goal formulation. Resources which would help to resolve conflicts need to be assessed and also alternatives for resources should be generated and assessed. In a given situation or for a given problem to be resolved, the best alternative to resolve conflict needs to be selected and then implementation of that alternative needs to be done. Then evaluation of the course of action and the problem solving process needs to be carried out to determine whether the alternative used for problem solving resulted in resolution of the problem. If not, the process of problem solving should be re-started.

11.3 CONFLICT

Let us first address the question, “What is conflict?”

11.3.1 Concept of Conflict

Conflict can be defined as direct opposition, a clash or disagreement between people. Conflicts are experienced at home, work and other social milieus. As long as you have people dealing with people, making decisions or meeting deadlines – you will have conflict.

11.3.2 Forms of Conflict

Some basic forms of conflict according to the person's tendency to approach or to avoid goal may be categorized as follows:

1. Approach-Approach Conflict

Approach-approach conflict can arise when people are faced with two equally attractive but mutually exclusive goals — choosing one automatically means giving up the other. For example, — husband asked the wife to select one place out of two good places for excursion. After deciding for one, the wife felt doubts regarding the choice she had made; this stress would not occur if only one choice was available.

2. Approach-Avoidance Conflict

This is the situation when people generally experience the sort of stress when they want to do something, but know that some of the consequences of doing it will be unpleasant. Thus, it pertains to a single goal that has both positive and negative consequences. For example, a couple wants to become parents but uneasiness about new responsibilities and loss of freedom makes them want to avoid having children.

3. Avoidance-Avoidance Conflict

This refers to the stressful situation which involves an inescapable choice between two equally unattractive goals or outcomes. For example, when either a husband or a wife having frequent fights with each other wants to opt for a divorce, but at the same time knows about the problems ahead after divorce. The response to this type of conflict is often to avoid making any decision at all.

4. Double Approach-Avoidance Conflict

This is the situation in which there are two possible courses of action, and each presents an approach-avoidance conflict. It is a complex situation.

11.3.3 Characteristics of Family Conflict

No matter how loving a family is, all families go through conflict. Family conflict have some typical features due to the inherent aspects of family life. For example, family members normally are already emotionally attached, and these emotions can quickly intensify conflict. Another important aspect is that family members are involved in long-term relationships and often are required to interact with each other daily. Further, families are often insular, obeying their own rules and resisting outside interference. These characteristics can lead to long, tangled, painful conflicts. At one extreme, family conflict can lead to things like divorce or domestic violence. At the other, families try to repress conflict, avoiding problems and detaching from each other.

Now let us discuss the characteristics of family conflicts particularly with reference to the aspects of intensity, complexity, duration of relationship in family relationship.

- 1) **Intensity:** Family conflicts are more intense than conflicts in other groups. It implies managing conflict is more difficult in families and their consequences can be more damaging.

You are aware that relationships between family members are the closest and the most emotionally intense. They tend to involve the highest level of attachment, affection and commitment; for instance between adult partners; parents and children; and siblings. One contributing factor is that daily contact for many years bonds them together. However, the intense, positive emotional investment can be transformed into intense, negative emotion as well! Can you give an example of this process? Yes, an extramarital affair or child abuse can produce hate as intense as the love that existed prior to this activity.

- 2) Complexity: Family relationships are multidimensional incorporating aspects such as love, respect, friendship, hate, resentment, jealousy, rivalry, disapproval etc.

For example, Rani is a battered wife, but is still staying with her husband or Babu is an abused child but still wants to live and stay with his abusive parents. Why is it so? Because positive and complex emotional bonds between them outweigh the pain involved with the conflicts. The ambivalence, that is complexity in family relationships, is an important factor that needs to be considered. Thus, recognising the multiple dimensions of family conflicts is a prerequisite to deal more effectively and efficiently with family problems.

- 3) Duration of family relationships is related to duration of conflicts and long-term effects of dysfunctional conflict patterns. Family relationships typically last for a lifetime. For example, parents will remain parents and siblings will remain siblings always!

Serious conflictual relationships within families can continue for long periods which increases the harm from the conflict; especially the psychological effects. High rates of conflicts may not be damaging if most of the episodes are resolved.

11.3.4 Types of Family Conflicts

There are primarily three types of family conflicts those pertaining to, (1) Couple relationships, (2) Family relationships, and (3) Parent-child relationships.

Family conflict often involves more than two individuals. Some families have lot of conflict but still function well because conflicts are embedded in the context of the other behaviours.

● Couple Relationships

Marital adjustment is the degree to which the husband and wife get along with each other or have a good working relationship and are able to satisfy each other's needs over marital life course. The intimacy, closeness and affection depend on the feelings both partners have about themselves.

“Me” feelings are tempered with “We” feelings. This change is helpful for good couple relationship.

Keys for good healthy couple relationship are given below:

- ❖ Husband and wife as best friends,
- ❖ Confessions of past life experiences,

- ❖ Fifty-fifty partnership (household task etc.),
- ❖ Children are essential for marital happiness, and
- ❖ Positive mutual feelings.

Positive Conflict

Mostly people think of avoiding conflict or it is uncomfortable but have you ever thought that conflicts can have some positive benefits? Conflicts are a fact of life to be dealt with and not a sign of failure. Conflicts provide with an opportunity for new learning and improved relationships.

Some ways conflict can have positive effects are as follows:

- ❖ Confrontation in a conflict can lead to change,
- ❖ Being aware of conflicts can increase your motivation to do well,
- ❖ Conflicts increase awareness of problems that need to be solved,
- ❖ Conflicts make life more interesting,
- ❖ Disagreement often causes a decision to be thought through more carefully,
- ❖ Conflicts help you understand what you are like under pressure,
- ❖ Minor conflicts can defuse potentially large ones, and
- ❖ Conflicts can be fun if they are not taken too seriously.

Basic and Non-Basic Conflicts

Basic conflicts resolve around carrying out marital roles and the functions of marriage and the family. For example, such as providing companionship, working and rearing children. For example, sexual relations among husband and wife are expected, but if one of them due to religious reason forbids sexual interaction, then it will become a conflict as it is basic to the fundamental role. The relationship can break and one may leave the other.

Non-basic conflict can be resolved and relationship can continue. For example, suppose the husband wants to change job and move to another place, but the wife does not want to go. This is a major but not basic conflict as the husband is not rejecting his role of provider.

Situational and Personality Conflicts

Situational Conflict depends on some situation and is based on specific demands, like putting the things at the right place, division of housework equitably, sharing childcare responsibilities etc. Conflict arises when one tries to change the situation. These can be resolved through compromise, bargaining or mediation.

Personality Conflict arises due to personality traits like aggression, dominating nature, depression, hostile nature, destructive nature etc. These types of conflict require a therapeutic approach.

● Family Relationships

Family strengths are those relationship patterns, interpersonal skills, social and psychological characteristics that create fulfillment and satisfaction for a family as individuals and as a whole.

Sibling relationships are friendly and less conflictual if parents respond warmly and sensitively to all their children and do not favour one child over another.

Although sibling rivalry and conflict occur in sibling relationships but even then siblings also provide each other with emotional support, care taking and teaching.

Some Do's for minimizing sibling rivalry problem are given below:

- ❖ Work on settling disagreements with your siblings yourself,
- ❖ Talk about your feelings,
- ❖ Look for your own strengths instead of comparing yourself to siblings, and
- ❖ Make it a point to settle, or avoid, differences with your siblings.

Relationship with Other Family Members

Problems with in-laws occur when a spouse feels that an in-law is exerting too much influence on her or his partner. Initial small sacrifices made to reduce in-law concerns creates positive atmosphere for the feelings of their in-laws.

Problem solving with in-laws includes following strategies:

- 1) Show mutual respect : Understand the other person's point of view and avoid attitudes of rejection.
- 2) Pinpoint the real issue : Real issues often mask other factors in a conflict situation; for example, daughter-in-law in job and wishes of in-laws of becoming grand parents.
- 3) Seek areas of agreement : Through calm discussion, additional areas of agreement may be identified.
- 4) Mutually working out solutions: Through brainstorming find out best possible solution and implement it.

● Parent-Child Relationship

Parenting is a process of caring for children and helping them grow and learn.

Parental attitude involves positive willingness to have children, to rear them, to have interest in their activities, to enjoy being with children.

Good parents usually use skills, give lots of time, energy, have patience, understanding etc.

Parents develop their parenting styles from their own experiences during childhood, their personalities, societal influences and the parent's basic attitudes toward children and child-rearing.

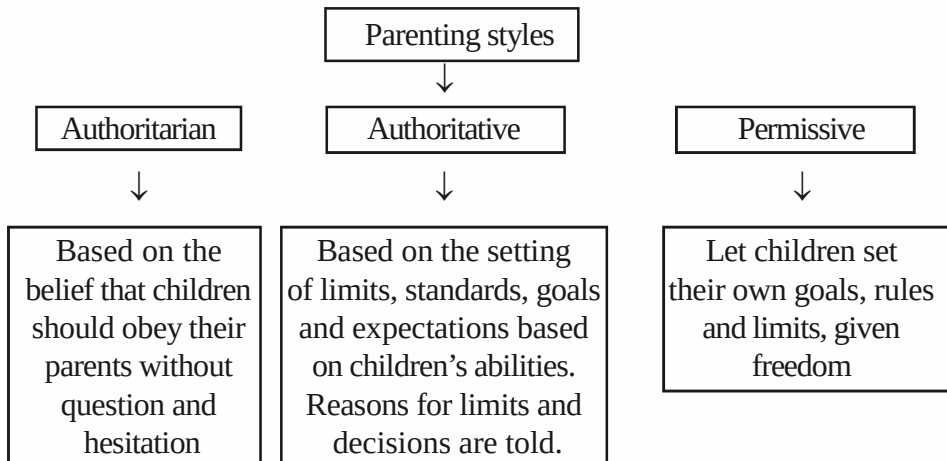


Fig. 11.1: Parenting styles according to Baumrind

In early childhood stage parents often make decisions and solve conflicts by offering few options. As the child grows, resolution of conflict techniques also change due to increased reasoning ability of children.

During adolescence period a greater number of family conflicts are there due to search for independence and role expectancies, which in turn also affects marital relationship due to numerous factors.

Conflict in above case can be resolved if parents are;

- ❖ Emotionally balanced,
- ❖ Consistent in behaviour,
- ❖ United with each other,
- ❖ Supportive and loving,
- ❖ Understanding, and
- ❖ Compromising in nature.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Define conflict.

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2)	Enumerate the types of conflicts.
	
	
	
	
3)	What kind of conflict has a positive outcome?
	
	
	
	
4)	Differentiate between basic / non-basic conflicts and situational/ personality conflicts?
	
	
	
	

11.4 COMMON SOURCES OF CONFLICTS

Let us list out the common sources of conflicts in the family.

11.4.1 Communication Problems

Communication is a process of creating and sharing meanings. If messages are not understood, the meanings may be misunderstood as stated in the following examples:

- Keshav and Geeta (couple) wanted a “large” family but Keshav meant three children and Geeta meant “large” as seven or eight children.
- Raju and Radha (couple) agreed upon spending “a lot of money”. Raju thought “a lot of money” meant two thousand rupees but Radha meant over ten thousand rupees.

We can say that if the couple or other family members while interacting have clear and well understood messages then unnecessary conflicts can be avoided and the relationship can last for longer.

11.4.2 Problems Related to Children

Conflicts over children cover a number of areas, from including disagreement about discipline and child-rearing practices, and children with physical, mental or emotional handicaps. Marital conflict and children’s problems tend to occur in combination and especially during adolescence, conflicts levels are typically high. Due to own identities during this period, tensions and disagreements between parents and children arise.

11.4.3 Sexual Problems

Mostly sexual dissatisfaction results due to lack of trust in the couples, which in turn leads to conflicts among them. Also lack of interest and inability to enjoy sexual activities lead to sexual problems.

11.4.4 Work and Employment Problems

Conflicts concerning housework are a common source of stress for dual-career couples especially for wives. Dual-career couples with children have stress that is caused by demanding occupations, parenting, and work-related responsibilities.

11.4.5 Financial Problems

Money management and financial success are related to prestige, self-respect, power composition and love-worthiness. The financial disagreements that surface in the achievement of family goals usually involve issues about responsibility commitment and self-worth. Success or failure of marriages also depends on the money management techniques couples employ. Effective money management includes communication on a regular basis about money matters, continued involvement of both spouses in money issues, and agreement on both short-term and long-term financial goals.

11.4.6 Decision Making

It is one of the most important activities in families and ranges from the trivial to the serious satisfactory family decisions requiring good listening and negotiation skills. Family decisions are of two types, these are (1) Instrumental decisions — such as providing transportation, paying the family bills etc. and (2) Affective decisions — related to emotions and feelings.

11.5 STAGES OF MARITAL CONFLICT

Any conflict that takes place in the family may follow some particular steps or stages such as:

11.5.1 Gesture Exchange

It involves transformation of interaction into conflict (words, gestures); for example, when the wife came to know that her husband had an affair with their maid she did not want to live in the same house with him any more. She gave expression to her feelings of horror, despair and indignation.

11.5.2 Period of Conflict

This period involves an exchange of symbolic blows (verbal and sometimes physical abuse) for example, if the husband has done something that threatens his wife's identity, the wife may feel physical pain, utter harsh words, rush out of room — hurting the husband's self-esteem. The husband may say 'sorry', and the wife may begin to soften. Meanwhile the husband admits to the "moment of infatuation". Again the wife screams "Go away and don't talk about your infatuations". These types of blows are there in this stage.

11.5.3 Accommodation

Accommodation is the cessation of overt conflict conciliation, and the activation of the counter process of harmony.

11.5.4 Reassessment

It involves replay or re-enactment of conflict in imagination. For example, the wife in the previous example re-evaluates her position as the mother of children. She may forgive her husband as he still really loves her and she realises that a separation or divorce would not be in the children's interest. So, the conflict is reviewed to improve the outcome.

11.5.5 Aftermath

There is either a reactivation of the conflict, avoidance of its source, or conciliation, depending on the results of the reassessment stage. For example, husband and wife continue to be husband and wife but with an underlying sense of hurt. A conciliation is achieved and conflict is resolved. Disrupted activities (household) are resumed.

Likewise there are numerous other situations in the relationships where sometimes conflicts are not resolved easily and termination of relationship may occur or a family counsellor is required etc.

11.6 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict management refers to how the conflicts are resolved. In other words, it involves dispute resolution. Do you know that conflicts are managed skillfully if there is a good understanding and a variety of techniques are used?

Conflict resolution is a process of ending a conflict by cooperating and problem solving together. It is an effective approach to solving disagreements.

Conflict resolution can be easy if you just remember **the 3-Cs of conflict resolution**—

- ❖ **Commitment:** Promising peace means use of non-violent conflict resolution skills.
- ❖ **Cooperation:** It means working together for common benefit.
- ❖ **Compromise:** Bending and mending; it means each person gives up something and gets something.

The 3-Rs of conflict resolution —

- ❖ **Respect:** Show respect and you will receive respect.
- ❖ **Rights:** You have basic rights. No one should infringe on the rights of others.
- ❖ **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your actions. Don't just blame the other person.

Conflict style influences the kinds of disputes families have. It refers to specific tactics and behavioural routines individuals or families use when conflicts occur.

11.6.1 Types of Conflict Style

There are three main types of conflict styles, as given below:

- ❖ **Power assertive style** based on the power relations that are part of the family system. For example, one family member may dominate in all disputes and forcefully settle all conflicts. Another example is arguments in families with teenagers about power issues.

- ❖ **Avoidant style** in which endless bickering is there and any kind of settlement or resolution is rare. A negative family climate is created, that erodes positive family bond, e.g. conflict may be seen as too stressful or simply inappropriate among family members.
- ❖ **Constructive conflict style** in which people work together to solve the problem and come to a better understanding of each other. It brings issues out into open, where bargaining resolves the conflict.

11.6.2 Defense Mechanisms

These are intrapsychic processes for tampering with reality to avoid emotional pain. Behaviours for defending oneself and used to cope with anxiety and stressful feelings, defense mechanisms may delay or deny conflict resolution. To strengthen the interpersonal relationships among the family members, one should know about some major defense mechanisms; such as:

- ❖ **Escapism:** It is used to avoid dealing with the problem, and involves direct or indirect denial that a problem exists.
- ❖ **Rationalisation:** It involves false justification of one's behaviour and is used when real reasons are threatening for self-esteem.
- ❖ **Projection:** In projection one inappropriately places blame on others.
- ❖ **Displacement:** In displacement feelings and frustrations are replaced or transferred on to insignificant events.
- ❖ **Intellectualisation:** In this, one becomes cool, distant and uninvolved to avoid the threatening nature of an intimate relationship.

11.7 TECHNIQUES OF DEALING WITH CONFLICTS

In this Section, we will discuss some major techniques of dealing with conflicts.

11.7.1 Role Induction

In role induction, one partner changes while the other does not. This includes:

- ❖ *Coercion:* Overt attacks, threats, verbal or physical force, giving orders etc.
- ❖ *Coaxing:* Asking, promising, pleading, begging, tempting etc.
- ❖ *Masking:* Behaviours like lying, censoring or selectively telling facts etc.
- ❖ *Unmasking:* Painful truths, damaging the other's ego etc.
- ❖ *Postponement:* Letting the conflict drag, unresolved for weeks, months or even years in expectation that the person will change.

11.7.2 Role Modification

In role modification, both partners change their attitudes and behaviours. This includes:

- ❖ *Role taking:* When one partner begins to see things through the eyes of the other.

- ❖ *Joking and Banter*: It relieves tensions, and involves light, playful, teasing remarks etc. — the couple laughs with each other not at each other.
- ❖ *Exploration*: It involves cooperative examination of the problem. For establishing a creative solution, each partner tests the ability of the other.
- ❖ *Compromise*: Spouses discover what each will actually accept for the reality of their daily lives.
- ❖ *Consolidation*: Once couple has agreed upon a compromise, they must make that compromise work. Both need to be more supportive during conflict resolution process.

Not all conflicts are resolved or ended by compromise, consolidation, or coercion. Some are ended only by the dissolution of the relationship in divorce or separation. There may be haggling over the same problems year in year out. Chronic conflict can then become cumulative conflict, ending only with the end of the relationship, when there is no mediation, no discussion, no accommodation etc.

11.8 POSITIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Positive approaches in managing family or marital conflict enhance or enrich the relationships. These positive approaches or coping strategies are as follows:

11.8.1 Ownership of Problem

When the conflict arises, one has to establish ownership of the problem to resolve it. For this “I” messages into be used — the skill that facilitates communication because the two spouses talk directly to rather than about, each other. “You” is avoided so as not to shift the blame to the other person. “I” message has following three elements:

- ❖ Non blameful description of the situation,
- ❖ Tangible effects of the behaviour, and
- ❖ Feelings evoked.

11.8.2 Empathic Listening

Couples must hear without evaluating (listening for the feelings of words said and the meaning of words not said) by:

- ❖ Restating by other partner of what has been said, and
- ❖ Further clarification.

It means active listening skills need to be used.

11.8.3 Negotiating a Solution

The following points should be kept in mind while negotiating a solution:

- ❖ Ask for particular action or change,
- ❖ Don’t only hint; rather ask in direct way,
- ❖ Avoid misunderstandings which lead to frustration,

- ❖ Negotiation depends upon couple's confidence, esteem and trust for each other,
- ❖ Negotiation can reduce role strain and lead to personal and relationship growth, and
- ❖ It is useful for good marital adjustment and satisfaction.

11.8.4 Identifying and Expressing Feelings

- ❖ Feelings should be identified; that means, to show concern for the feelings of the other spouse,
- ❖ Emotions should be expressed in heartfelt ways, and
- ❖ There should be openness in expressing feelings to each other.

11.9 CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Conflict resolution process has five stages, which are discussed below:

11.9.1 Awareness

“Hot” emotions such as anger, irritation can turn disagreements into outright battles. When a conflict is brewing, become aware that there is a problem. Earlier the recognition, the better the chance for a simpler solution.

11.9.2 Setting Limits

Point or points to be argued are established (limits of the conflict). Going beyond these to argue other issues is not allowed. For example, two persons in the family (brother and sister) had a fight last week on going to the market. Today again they have a fight on some other issue. But during quarreling if they drag in the last week's issue today, then the conflict will not be resolved. In this case the two of them need to recognise each other's positions, otherwise it may lead to mutual complaining. So setting limits is very important.

11.9.3 Arguing

The goal is to understand each other's position better. Disagreements are brought to the surface. Verbal and non-verbal messages are there.

11.9.4 Negotiating

Bargaining and negotiations are important in settling a conflict. It is a process of reconciling differences between people. There is presence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and suggestions are made for possible solutions. Points of agreement are sought.

“Better bend than break”

Conflict can be solved successfully by arriving at a solution satisfying to both parties. It means *compromise* – you give a little to get a little. The focus is on ways for both parties to “Win” in negotiation. Sometimes chances are there in negotiation that everyone is not satisfied when solutions do not meet their concerns and needs. That is why constructive type of conflict resolution is required for mutual satisfactory ending.

11.9.5 Following Up

It is the final stage of conflict resolution. It means putting the disagreement behind, so that the relationship can be strong again. Solutions are put into action and any emotional problems are resolved.

Resolving conflicts fairly can improve the quality of your life with your family and friends.

11.10 SEEKING PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

In spite of good intentions and communication skills, not all couples are able to resolve their problems on their own. Accepting the need for professional assistance may be a significant first step toward reconciliation and change.

Seek help from expert – counsellors/family therapists – when communication is hostile, conflict goes unresolved, individuals can't resolve their differences, and/or a partner is thinking about leaving.

We should remember that the role of the therapists is to point out aspects of reality and to serve as a facilitator, that can provide direction to the tasks that must be accomplished in marriage and family relationships.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Define conflict resolution.

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2) List the steps of conflict resolution process in the family.

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11.11 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have learnt that conflict is viewed as a normal part of life for marriage partners and family members, whose positions and needs may be contradictory but interrelated. When managed constructively, conflict can lead to positive family relationship growth. Sources of marital conflict vary from couple to couple, but the most common are communication problems, money disputes, sexual dissatisfaction and disagreements concerning the children. Family conflicts can be systematically resolved through proper techniques to promote healthy

family relationship. If problems continue to exist despite resolution attempts, couples need to seek professional assistance from a counsellor or family therapist.

11.12 GLOSSARY

Ambivalence	:	Conflict resulting from simultaneous feeling of being attracted and repelled by the same object, action or goal often expressed in approach-avoidance behaviours.
Basic conflict	:	Disagreement about fundamental roles, rules, tasks and functions.
Compromise	:	Giving in on some points of disagreement and having your way on others.
Conflict	:	A disagreement or struggle between two or more people.
Conflict resolution	:	An approach to solving disagreements.
Coping	:	Process of utilising resources in response to stress.
Defense mechanisms	:	Unconscious, intrapsychic process used to reduce anxiety and emotional conflict.
Denial	:	Refusing to believe the facts, thinking and acting as if those facts do not exist.
Family therapy	:	Treatment modality focused on relationships within the family system.
Negotiation	:	The process of decreasing discrepancies between expectations and behaviour through communication.
Non-basic conflict	:	A struggle or disagreement over an issue that may seem important at the time, but will not threaten the existence of the relationship if left unresolved.
Personality conflict	:	Based on person's traits such as aggression, dominance, hostility, depression etc. which are unlikely to be resolved easily.
Self-disclosure	:	Telling about yourself.
Situational conflict	:	Conflict arising as the result of specific acts, events, behaviours or situations which are amenable to resolution.

11.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Conflict can be defined as a disagreement or struggle between two or more people.

- 2) Following are different types of conflicts:
 - i) Approach – Approach,
 - ii) Approach – Avoidance,
 - iii) Avoidance – Avoidance, and
 - iv) Double Approach – Avoidance.
- 3) Constructive conflict – in which opponents recognise each other's positions has a positive outcome.
- 4) Basic conflict is a disagreement about fundamental roles, rules, tasks and functions whereas non basic conflict is a disagreement about non fundamental or situational issues. Situational conflict is due to situations / specific demands, acts, events, behaviour etc. which are resolved, whereas personality conflict is based on some traits of an individual like aggression, depression, dominance etc. which are unlikely to be resolved easily.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Conflict resolution is a process of ending a conflict by cooperating and problem solving together. It is an approach to solving disagreements.
- 2) The various steps of conflict resolution process in the family are awareness, setting limits, argument, negotiation and following up.
- 3) During the setting limits stage of conflict resolution the points to be argued are established and going beyond these points to argue other issues is not allowed.
- 4) To negotiate is to deal or bargain with another. Negotiation is important in settling family conflicts by initiating suggestions for possible solutions for agreement to resolve the problem.

11.14 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Define conflict and explain various forms of conflicts with the help of examples.
2. What are the common sources of conflicts in the family.
3. Explain different stages of marital conflict.
4. What is conflict resolution?

11.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 12 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Structure

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

“Why don’t you wear your pink sari?” Rahul advised his wife, as they are getting ready to go out for a party. “Do you think I am a kid who needs your advice on what I should or shouldn’t wear”? Shilpa retorts. To which Rahul says, “Oh, wear whatever you feel like. I don’t care if you seem to be appeared for a fancy dress show.” Could this couple have side stepped the differences that are growing

up between them? The key to managing such encounters are recognising the pitfalls of interpersonal communication and sharpening your skills to deal effectively with them. This Unit focuses on this aspect.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of communication and interpersonal communication;
- Explain effective communication and competencies for being an effective communicator;
- Identify and explain the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication;
- Connect the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication when speaking to others;
- Employ strategies for establishing and sustaining interpersonal communication, such as listening and conversation skills; and
- Identify barriers to effective communication.

12.2 CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

It is true that all of us need solitude. On the other hand, each of us has a point beyond which we do not want to be alone. Family is where most of us learn to communicate and, even more important, where most of us learn how to think about communication (Bruner, 1990).

Let us first understand the term communication. The word **communication** originates from the word “communis”, which means common. Communication, therefore, is an act by which a person shares knowledge, feelings, ideas and information, in ways such that each gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent and use of the message.

12.2.1 How Communication Takes Place

Communication can occur without words. Our five senses, audio, visual, touch, smell, and taste, communicate. The ring of the alarm tells us its time to wake up, the eyes gaze at the window and check for the time of day or weather, the touch of the wind on our skin tells us if it is hot or cold and the smell from the kitchen tells us what is cooking. When a message is sent from a source to a receiver, a specific mental or physical response (communication) occurs.

Communication is a two-way process. It has a transmitter and a receiver. Therefore, it is essential for facts to be transmitted in such a manner that the meaning intended is conveyed and the receiver understands the use of the message. It becomes a two-way process. There are many different types and methods of communication. For example, in India, people fold their hands in greeting. In Japan, people bow from the waist. In Pakistan, people touch their forehead with the right hand. Simple gestures are an effective means of communication. An effective and culturally sensitive communicator is able to read feelings and reactions through these gestures. Early human beings communicated through symbols and gestures. Later, the spoken word, in the form of language, was used for communication. As technology developed, written words and media were used,

in addition to symbols, gestures and the spoken word. Research shows that, on an average, a person spends about 70 per cent of her or his active time communicating, namely, speaking, reading, gesturing, writing, listening and watching.

Communication can be defined as a process of meaningful interaction whereby a person not only sends but also receives and understands a message. Communication always has a purpose. It can be categorised into four different types, depending on the nature of the interaction., namely, intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and mass communication.

12.2.2 Difference Between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal in nature. In verbal communication, we use words or language in the written or spoken form. Though much of our life is controlled by other people, we alone are in control of our voices. There are three basic controls that can and should be adjusted based on your purpose for verbally communicating. First is volume, second is rate, third is pitch. With a slight change in volume, rate and pitch, we can communicate anger, disappointment, sorrow, excitement and a variety of other emotions, without even realising it.

- 1) **Volume:** Volume is how loud or soft your voice is. First, whatever you are trying to verbally communicate should always be audible, or able to be heard. Second, you can use volume to emphasize certain words, phrases or ideas in order to communicate importance to your audience. For example, John F. Kennedy's famous quote was "Ask NOT what your country can do for YOU, but what YOU can do for your country". In another quote for example, "The ONLY thing we have to FEAR is FEAR itself".
- 2) **Rate:** Rate is the speed at which you speak. Many times, we allow our mood to determine the rate of our speech. By being prepared when speaking or thinking about what you are saying, you can avoid a misunderstanding of what you are saying.
- 3) **Pitch:** Pitch is the highness or lowness of a tone. Most of us need to work on modulation of pitch in the voice in order to emphasize what we are saying.

Non-verbal communication is often given secondary importance, but it is much more important than verbal communication. It includes a series of gestures, such as facial expressions, signs, body movements, eye contact, tone of voice, and sounds. In normal interpersonal communication 5-10 per cent of total communication is verbal while 90-95 per cent is non-verbal. People can receive valuable information through non-verbal cues such as body language, eye contact, facial expression, head nodding or shaking, playing with objects, making sounds, signs, touch, taste and silence.

As the focus of the Unit is on interpersonal communication, let us now understand what interpersonal communication is.

12.3 THE PROCESS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

We all are familiar with the term interpersonal communication. Let us now understand how various theorists describe its meaning. **Interpersonal communication** is a type of communication where there is one-to-one interaction

or interaction among a small group. This is the most commonly used or practised form of communication.

Communication channels, that carry messages from sender to receiver, take two distinct forms: direct and indirect.

- **Direct channels:** Direct channels are obvious and easily recognised by the receiver and are in control of the sender. Verbal channels rely on words, as in written or spoken communication. Non-verbal channels encompass facial expressions and controlled body movements. For instance, traffic policemen use hand gestures to control traffic.
- **Indirect channels:** Indirect channels are usually recognised subconsciously by the receiver, and are not always under direct control of the sender. For instance, one's body language may inadvertently reveal one's true emotions and feelings about the other person. Subconsciously a person might describe these feeling with arbitrary terms like gut-feeling, or hunch.

Interpersonal communication is the process through which people create and manage their relationships, exercising mutual responsibility in creating meaning (Verderber, Verderber, and Berryman Fink, 2007).

Now that you have a basic understanding of the process of human communication, it is time to look at what makes some types uniquely interpersonal.

12.3.1 Two Views of Interpersonal Communication

Scholars have characterised interpersonal communication in a number of ways. The most obvious definition focuses on the number of people involved. A **quantitative** definition of interpersonal communication includes any interaction between two people, usually face-to-face. Social scientists call two persons interacting; a *dyad* and they often use the adjective “*dyadic*” to describe this type of communication. So, in a quantitative sense, the terms dyadic communication and interpersonal communication can be used interchangeably. For example, using a quantitative definition, interaction between a salesperson and customer would be an example of interpersonal communication, whereas that between a teacher and class or a performer and audience would not.

Often it may happen that the communication between two people may not seem to be interpersonal in its real sense. For example, rushed exchange when you ask a stranger on the street for directions. Thus, some scholars argue that quality is what denotes interpersonal communication. Using a **qualitative** definition, interpersonal communication occurs when people treat one another as unique individuals, regardless of the context in which the interaction occurs or the number of people involved.

12.3.2 Principles of Interpersonal Communication

These principles underlie the workings in real life of interpersonal communication in qualitative term. They are basic to communication and we cannot ignore them. The specific characteristics are as follows:

Uniqueness

Qualitatively interpersonal relationships are characterised by the development of unique rules and roles. For example, between siblings you might handle an argument

with your younger brother by expressing disagreements as soon as they arise, whereas with your elder brother you might withhold your resentment until they build up and may periodically clear up.

Irreplaceability

As interpersonal relationships are unique, thus they can't be replaced. For example, you cannot fill the void which is created after the demise of a close family member or friend. No matter how many other relationships are developed in our lives, none of them will ever be quite like the one that just ended.

Inescapability

We can't escape the process of communication. The very attempt of not communicating, communicates something. Through not only words, but through tone of voice and through gestures, posture, facial expressions, etc., we constantly communicate to those around us. Through these channels, we constantly receive communication from others. Even when you sleep, you communicate. People mostly judge you by your behaviour and not your intentions.

Irreversibility and Complexity

The fourth characteristic of qualitatively interpersonal relationships is irreversibility. You can't really take back something once it has been said. The effect must inevitably remain. A Russian proverb says, "Once a word goes out of your mouth, you can never swallow it again". It happens with most of us in spite of anger. We say something that might hurt significant others in our life and later regret the words used by us, but it would be too late by then. Thus, it is essential to control your words and mind even in difficult circumstances. Communication is not simple. Because of the number of variables involved, even simple requests are extremely complex. More communication may also make 'communication' difficult to succeed.

Contextual

Communication does not happen in isolation. There are different contexts in which communication takes place, namely, cultural, situational, and environmental. For instance, environmental context deals with the physical "where" you are communicating. Location, noise level, season, time of day, all are examples of factors in the environmental context that effect communication. Situational context, on the other hand, talks of psycho-social aspects of communication. An interaction that takes place with a student in a classroom setting would be very different from the one that takes place in a party. Cultural context includes all the learned behaviours and rules that affect the interaction. If you come from a culture where talkativeness is respected, you would be respected more positively the more you talk. On the other hand, if quietness is respected, you would be appreciated if you remain silent as a gesture of respect to the speaker and even in context of disagreement to other's viewpoint.

12.3.3 Functions of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is important because of the functions it performs. Whenever we engage in communication with another person, we seek to gain information about them. We also give out information through a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal clues.

Be informed about others

When we engage in communication with others, we gather lots of information about another individual. It is also important to gain information about others so

that we can interact with them more effectively. We can make informed opinion about how they feel, think and how they act in varied situations. This information is predominantly gathered through observation.

Know one's own self

Another important function of interpersonal communication is to know about one's own self. It is not surprising to note that we engage in adapting to different roles, that of a wife, sister, mother, employee or a stranger in a relationship. This helps us know ourselves better in relation to the environment.

Being sensitive to the context and situation

One of the significant functions of interpersonal communication is to understand and be sensitive to the context and situation in which behaviour is exhibited. The way we communicate with others may differ depending on what has been said and in what context.

As you must have experienced, it is very easy to recognise a good communicator, and even easier to spot the poor ones. But what are the characteristics that distinguish effective communicators from their less successful counterparts? We'll examine this aspect in the next section.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Communication is a two way process. Justify by citing relevant examples.

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2) What is interpersonal communication?

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3) Fill in the blanks:

- i) There are _____ basic controls that can and should be adjusted based on your purpose for verbally communicating. These are _____, _____, and _____.
- ii) _____ is how loud or soft your voice is.
- iii) _____ is the speed at which you speak.
- iv) _____ is the highness and lowness of your voice.

12.4 COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Communication competence refers to effectiveness of communication, leading us to the question – “Who is an effective communicator?”

It is difficult to define who is an effective communicator and even more difficult is to achieve communication competence. At times you might wonder what holds friends, lovers and families together? What makes one popular and interesting among people? You might have also observed that at times, husband and wife separate after long years of companionship, conflicts arise between childhood friends and the relationship breaks. The answers to these and many other questions can be related to the communication competence of individuals. Let us first understand the definition. Communication competence involves achieving one's goals in a manner that, ideally, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs. Effectiveness at interpersonal communications leads to positive relations with friends, colleagues, families, and lack of it leads to relationship deterioration. This description shows that communication competence has several important characteristics.

12.4.1 Characteristics of Communication Competence

Following are the various characteristics of communication competence:

There is No “Ideal” Way to Communicate

You need to understand that there is no magic or rule of thumb for being an effective communicator. Your own experience must have shown you that there is no one communication style that can be effective in varied situations. Some very successful communicators are straightforward while others are very diplomatic in their approach. A few seem to be very serious while others use humour in their content. Thus, there are many types of competent communication. It is possible to learn from observing different models, which could be a teacher, a politician or even a journalist! As a young school going child, almost everyone imitates and wants to be like her or his teacher; as an adolescent you might start copying the movie stars and celebrities, but it would be a big mistake to just try to copy them in such a way that it hides your own unique style or values in life. Cultural differences also illustrate that there is no single model of competence. Some behaviour in one culture might be very acceptable; however, it might be considered as inappropriate or offensive in another. For example, being articulate and speaking clearly is valued in many Western cultures; however, in some of the Asian cultures it might appear as a sign of disrespect for elders.

Competence is Situational

Competent behaviour varies from one situation and person to another. You might trade joking insults with your friend but your younger brother might feel bad if subjected to it. It's a myth to perceive that a person either possesses or lacks communication competence. In fact it should be perceived in degrees or areas of competence. You might deal with your friends quite skillfully at school, for example, while feeling odd or clumsy interacting with the grandparents or friends of your older sibling or son of your maidservant. You may show off your communication skills on sports, music or films, but may terribly lack in communication on politics and general knowledge. It might also happen that you are comfortable communicating with same sex persons but face difficulty in talking to people of different sex.

A behaviour that is appropriate in one relationship might be ineffective in others. For instance, one couple enjoys eating out in restaurants and hotels, while the other couple just likes to relish the home made food within the home premises. Adolescents may like to watch movies in the multiplexes; however, the parents might insist that they bring DVDs at home. Thus, a strategy that works so well in one relationship might not suit another. Researches reveal that no one type of behaviour was effective or ineffective in every relationship.

12.4.2 Strategies for Competent Communication

Let us discuss some strategies for competent communication. These are as follows:

1) Choosing from wide range of behaviours

Competent communication involves choosing actions from a wide range of behaviours. Imagine one of your relative arriving for your sister's marriage. She is gossiping and making fun of the groom and his family. You could respond to this in a number of ways:

You could decide to say nothing, figuring that the relative might create further tensions in the family.

You could ask your parents or other adults to say something to your relative about it.

You could hint at your discomfort, hoping that your relative would get the point.

You could directly tell your relative on her face in a straightforward way about your discomfort.

You could informally convey through a game or in your daily family interaction.

Many poor communicators do not think of varied options and thus are unable to deal with a situation properly. With these many choices, and of course there are many other options that you can think of, you can pick the one that will yield success in that particular situation.

2) Opting for the most appropriate behaviour

Simply thinking of varied options isn't just enough. You should be able to know that which option would work best in a particular situation. For instance, you would not gift a doll or a toy aeroplane to your aunty who is celebrating her 50th birthday. Unless she is really fond of dolls and children toys of course!!! Your selection of gifts for someone would depend on their age, interest, or needs. Similarly, while opting for the most appropriate behaviour, one should look for these factors. First, the context. The context includes the time and the place, which would influence your action. For example, the low-key communication style one finds at a funeral would be out of place at your freshers party in college.

Your goals or your objective will also shape the approach you take. If you are preparing for your exams and want to study with your friend, then you might call

your friend at your place or go to his place; but if you cannot study in a group then you might keep distances from the group study concept and say no to your friend.

Finally, your knowledge of the other person also shapes the approach you take. For instance, in the example cited earlier, if you know that your relative's habit of gossiping would not change, you would resort to saying nothing to her. You may lend your collection of classic books to a neighbour who returns them on time and in proper shape, but may not like to share it with your younger brother who mishandles the book. Similarly, you would act differently toward a 70-year-old person than you would toward a preschooler.

3) Developing the requisite skills

Simply being aware of many alternatives alone is not going to help. It is important for an individual to effectively and skillfully put the chosen alternative to work. There is a big difference between knowing about a skill and being able to put it into practice. Just reading about qualities of a competent communicator would not make you one. Instead it requires patience and many stages to pass through before acquiring the skill of communication. For instance, when you start learning riding a bicycle, you may first learn the rules and familiarise yourself with the breaks, pedal and other tools. You may learn a new way of sitting on the seat that can improve your accuracy of pedaling the cycle. Initially you may look awkward, ride in a zig-zag way and may even fall at times. This doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with these methods, but rather you may need more experience with them. Then comes a stage wherein you would consciously take care of your previous flaws. It may even happen in communication; you know the correct word and put correct grammar in place but still need to think hard to express yourself well. Lastly you integrate all the stages and become competent in effectively riding a bicycle. This may occur when you are able to perform well without thinking about it.

4) Cognitive Complexity

One of the important qualities of a competent communicator is to understand other person's point of view. Not everyone is good at expressing their feelings and thoughts clearly to others and thus it is an important skill to imagine how an issue might look from another person's point of view. The term cognitive complexity is used to describe the ability of an individual to construct a variety of different frameworks for viewing an issue. Let us consider an example to understand how cognitive complexity can increase competence. Imagine, as soon as your father comes back from office, you share your desire to go to another city for further studies. Your father doesn't permit you to pursue a degree course in another city. One possible explanation is that father doesn't have money to support your further studies. Another possibility is that he is upset and stressed due to some other issues at office and at the spur of the moment, he denied. Or perhaps he has never imagined to live without you and just the thought of it scares him. There could be many possible explanations for his denial. However, you might start thinking of the time when your father readily agreed for your elder brother's education abroad. You could even feel that your father doesn't love you anymore. Considering the issue from several angles might prevent you from over reacting or misunderstanding the situation and increasing the ways of resolving the issue amicably.

Cognitive complexity helps you to understand others better; self monitoring is one way to understand yourself. It is the process of paying close attention to one's behaviour and using these observations to shape the way one behaves. Say for example, "I should learn to say 'No' to people", "I think, I should talk first". Although too much of self monitoring can be equally problematic, people who are aware of their behaviour and the impression it makes are more skillful communicators than people who are low self-monitors. Self monitoring is important as it may provide reasons to understand why things are not going the way it should and thus a direction to change things for a better life.

6) Commitment

Communication is better in any relationship wherein people are committed. You can show commitment or concern for others by spending time with them, listening to them than just talking and being open to the ideas after hearing their opinions. Effective communicators know what they are talking about, and demonstrate through words and deeds that their ideas matter.

As we discussed earlier, competence isn't a trait that people either possess or lack. In a realistic way an individual should try and practise to communicate in ways outlined in this section. Research shows that we gain more information when we experience both hearing and seeing something. Non-verbal communication is the "what we see" form of communication. Thus, let us understand the importance of non-verbal communication, its principles, functions, and elements.

12.5 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Have you ever experienced that no one in your family has said anything, but still you sensed that something was not right? In a situation like this, you are responding to your family members' non-verbal hints or signals. You not only speak or listen to people but you also observe them. In this Section, you would become acquainted with non-verbal communication — that is, the way we express ourselves, not by what we say but by what we do.

Non-verbal communication contributes a lot in conveying messages and meanings. Thus, the ability to understand non-verbal messages becomes an important part of communication competence.

It may seem very simple, but first of all let us understand what is non-verbal communication. If 'non' means 'not' and 'verbal' means 'words', then 'non-verbal communication' means "communicating without words". But this definition based on literal meaning doesn't seem to be accurate. For instance, there is disagreement among scholars about whether sign language is non-verbal; and whether certain aspects of voice such as tone of voice, sighs, screams, voice qualities (loudness, pitch and so on) constitute verbal or non-verbal communication.

We may consider *non-verbal communication* as "those messages expressed by other linguistic means". This rules out not only sign language but words as well, though it includes messages transmitted by vocal means that don't involve language — the sighs, laughs, and other assorted noises. In addition, this definition allows exploring the non-linguistic dimensions of the spoken word — volume, rate, pitch, and so on.

ACTIVITY

Let us carry out an activity how non-verbal communication works. You can try this either at home or with your friends.

- Select a partner, and find a place where you have some space to yourself.
- Now sit back-to-back with your partner, making sure that no parts of your bodies are touching. You should be seated so that you can talk easily without seeing each other.
- Once you are seated, start talking to each other on any topic for 2 minutes. Make sure you do not look or touch each other.
- Next, turn around and face your partner. Now that you can both see and hear each other, carry on your conversation for another 2 minutes.
- Now face each other, but for next 2 minutes don't talk to each other. Instead, communicate whatever messages you want to through sight and touch. Try to communicate whatever you feel during this step. There is no need to feel shy or embarrassed, as there is no right or wrong way of behaving here. The only requirement is to remain silent.
- After you have finished the experiment, take some time to talk it over with your partner. Start by sharing how you felt in each part of the experience. Did your feelings change in different situations? Could you tell these feelings to your partner without expressing them in words?

This experiment points out several things about non-verbal communication and one important aspect is that non-verbal communication exists. Even if your friend is not talking to you, she or he could probably pick up your feelings through touch and your posture and expressions. The point here is not how you or your friend behaved during this exercise, but how people can interpret with non-verbal messages. In this Section, we would focus on how you can understand yourself and others better by knowing more about non-verbal communication.

As you have also read in the previous Unit, relationships are an important part of our life. Our relationships with our parents, friends, spouse and children are some of our prized possessions that we cherish throughout our lives. But it is our communication that determines the quality of these relationships. Communication as you know by now is both verbal and non-verbal in nature. Much of the value of these two ways of communicating comes from their differences. Let us now examine some general principles of non-verbal communication.

12.5.1 Principles of Non-Verbal Communication

Following are the major principles of non-verbal communication:

a) Non-verbal communication is multi-channelled

Most verbal messages like words, sentences and paragraphs reach us one at a time. However, non-verbal messages bombard us simultaneously from a multitude of channels. Imagine you are travelling on a bus or train, and a family sits besides you. On a verbal level there is relatively little information exchanged between you in the first few minutes of your conversation. But the number of non-verbal messages available to you are overwhelming — their facial expressions, postures, gestures, the distance they stand from you and so on tells you more than what is exchanged verbally.

b) Non-verbal communication is ambiguous

Non-verbal cues are informative but they are most reliable when accompanied by verbal messages and embedded in a familiar cultural and social context (Berry et al., 1994). Although verbal communication can be confusing, but words are more clear than the non-verbal cues. The raised eyebrow on the face of your boss can mean different things to different people. A frown may indicate that your idea is not clear to the audience or it may also depict disagreement with your viewpoint. The non-verbal message gets more clear if supported by verbal comments.

c) Non-verbal communication conveys emotions

Non-verbal communication is very effective in communicating emotions. People demonstrate their positive feelings for others by being more close, or by just holding their hands. The feeling of “I am with you”, could just be expressed by putting your hand on other’s shoulder or head. Still, non-verbal signals, on their own, are not precise indicators of emotional states that they were once believed to be (Krauss, 1998), so you should be cautious in making inferences.

d) Non-verbal communication is continuous

Unlike verbal communication, non-verbal communication is never ending and continuous. Speaking or writing has a clear beginning or end but non-verbal messages like your posture, gestures or expressions are endless. Even the absence of a message is a message! Have you ever experienced when your phone call was not answered by your classmate or your job application never received a reply from the company?

e) Non-verbal communication has more impact

Though it has been stated earlier that non-verbal communication is more ambiguous, but it is also true that when we get exposed to both verbal and non-verbal messages, non-verbal signals are more powerful and have more impact on our behaviour. In a situation like appearing for a job or dating your friend for the first time, non-verbal cues are given more weightage to understand the message than the words spoken.

f) Non-verbal communication is unconscious

There is an old saying that emphasizes on the skill of thinking before speaking. So, we think and plan before speaking or writing. But most of the non-verbal messages are not deliberate. Non-verbal communication usually happens unconsciously and cannot be hidden beyond a level. For instance, your shivering hands during your presentation may contradict your bold and confident voice and reveal your state of nervousness.

g) Non-verbal communication is culture specific

Non-verbal signals are different in different cultures. Every culture has its own unique way of communicating non-verbally. For instance, people of European culture tend to say ‘hello’ or make a firm handshake to greet people than people of Asian origin. There is a lot of variability amongst Asians as well. For instance, a Japanese may bow but an Indian may join both hands to show gratitude.

As you have learnt by now, non-verbal communication does not occur in a void. Non-verbal communication occurs jointly with verbal communication. We cannot function without either one. For instance, when someone asks you for directions, you could say, “It’s the second house from the school’s main gate”.

At the same time, you may even point in that direction. According to scholars, there are six major functions of non-verbal communication.

12.5.2 Functions of Non-Verbal Communication

Let us discuss some important functions of non-verbal communication. These are as follows:

i) Complementing

Some non-verbal messages complement the accompanying verbal messages. Complementing non-verbal behaviours signal the attitudes the interactants have for one another. Consider, for example, a father saying to his daughter, “I am always there for you”. These words alone are probably sufficient to convey the message of a father’s support for his daughter. However, if the words are combined with a pleasant voice, smile and a warm hug, the message is even stronger. In another case, consider a teacher who says to her student, “How dare you not attend my practical class!” Such a comment might scare the student, but it would be much more upsetting if the teacher combined it with a loud voice and wide eyes.

ii) Contradicting

Some non-verbal messages contradict, or are in conflict with the verbal. Consider, for example, your neighbour who throws all his house litter at the edge of your kitchen garden. You catch him red handed and say, “I hope you won’t throw it again in my garden”. He says with stumbling voice, “Sure, I won’t throw that again on your side”, but does so with extreme hostility in his speech and looks. It would be difficult to believe the person, as his verbal and non-verbal messages counter or are in conflict with each other. When the messages are contradictory, people tend to believe the non-verbal rather than the verbal message, except young children. Children below 12 years of age take the verbal message over non-verbal and do not understand the indirect way of communicating the meaning, which is known as *sarcasm*. For example, if a parent whose child tore an important document from his file says, “Very good Simran! Keep it happening”, the child may take her parent at his words and it may also happen that with this positive reinforcement the child may repeat the same act.

iii) Repeating

A non-verbal message serves the function of repeating the verbal and is sufficient even if the verbal message is not present. It can be generally observed when we place our order in restaurants or buy tickets in a movie hall. You are likely to say you want two tickets and simultaneously hold up two fingers. The non-verbal repeats the verbal and vice versa.

iv) Regulating

Non-verbal behaviours can serve a regulating function by influencing the flow of verbal communication. These regulatory non-verbal messages include looking at or away from the other person, raising a finger while pausing to show others that you have not finished speaking, raising or lowering the pitch of your voice and so on. At a formal gathering when we introduce each other and wish to signal that it is the other person’s turn now to introduce themselves, we may lower our voice tone, look at the other person and may stop gesturing.

v) Substituting

Non-verbal messages also serve the function of substituting the verbal message. A very common example is when we wave at each other on a railway station or airport. Similarly, a simple glare by your father or mother could have restrained you from doing an act or making noise. Sometimes, not sending or saying any verbal message may also indicate your anger or discomfort. Non-verbal substituting can be useful when people are reluctant to express their feelings in words. You might sigh, yawn or roll your eyes to show your disagreement to an argument.

vi) Accenting

In print we use italics or bold formatting to highlight an idea. Similarly, in oral messages we use non-verbal devices to emphasize or highlight a point, commonly known as *accenting*. For instance, stressing on a few words of the sentence, use of loud voice, pauses in speech are all ways to emphasize a point and the intention of the speaker. Accenting certain words with the voice, like, “It was *your* decision” is another way to add non-verbal emphasis.

You have learnt about the six main functions of non-verbal communication. But these functions do not occur independently of each other. It is likely that people may use them simultaneously. In short, it is important for you to understand that verbal messages alone are sufficient to produce meaning and so can non-verbal ways, but more commonly there is a combination of both verbal and non-verbal behaviour to produce meaning in others’ mind.

Keeping the general principles and functions in mind, let us take a look at some of the ways we communicate in addition to words.

12.5.3 Elements of Non-Verbal Communication

The first area of non-verbal communication is the broad field of *Kinesics*, or body position and motion. In this section, we will find out the role that postures, gestures, body orientation, facial expressions, and eye messages play in our relationships with others. Let us examine the various elements individually.

a) Body Orientation

Body orientation is the degree to which we face toward or away from someone with our body, feet and head. It is very interesting to observe people conversing in different settings like garden, train, movie theatres or at a party. Observe three people in conversation and interpret the way each person in the group clearly sends the message through their body language. For instance, if Hetal is more friendly with Swati than Ayushi, her body would be bent slightly towards Swati. It also makes it difficult for Ayushi to try to talk over others’ shoulder and thus may soon get the message to go away. You must have also observed at a crowded place, how individuals avoid involvement by just being facing away from each other.

b) Posture

Posture also conveys information about our attitude. For instance, when people lean toward you, it typically indicates interest and a positive attitude. To show resistance, people may cross their arms or angle their bodies away from us. To understand it better, stop reading for a moment, and notice how you are sitting. What does your position say non-verbally about how you feel? You can also sense by observing how others communicate non-verbally through their postures.

You should stand or sit in a position that is most comfortable and natural to you. Stand with your weight evenly distributed or sit in a welcoming position. Posture also conveys status and gender differences. Generally, a higher-status person will look more relaxed. By contrast, a lower-status person will tend to exhibit a more rigid body posture, often sitting up straight with feet together, flat on the floor, and arms close to the body (Hall, 1984). Again, status and gender differences are frequently parallel. That is, men are more likely to exhibit the high-status “open” posture and women the lower-status “closed” posture (Hall, 1984).

c) Gestures

Many people use gestures to describe and emphasize the words they speak. Gestures can be both conscious or unconscious. We intentionally use gestures to support our words by pointing to give direction or slamming hand to emphasize and assert. Occasionally, we may also shrug our shoulders to communicate the message which means “I don’t know”. However, it is necessary to understand that the meaning of gestures is not universal in nature. It varies according to culture. For instance, a circle made with the thumb and forefinger means that everything is “OK” to an American but is considered an obscene gesture in countries like Brazil and Denmark. Similarly, people may kiss or touch cheeks to greet others in countries like France and Germany not in traditional Asian cultures.

d) Face and eye movements

The study of communicative aspects of eye behaviour is known as *Oculesics*. Without uttering a single word we can avoid, control, love, hate, attack or insult others with our eye or face movements. The messages communicated by eyes and face go together. For example, widened eyes with a raised eyebrow may communicate surprise or shock. Using eye contact with audience members includes them in what you are saying. Eye contact also communicates honesty, sincerity and personality. Eye contact, also called *mutual gaze*, is another major channel of non-verbal communication. Researches support the viewpoint that people with high levels of eye contact have effective social skills and credibility. Gaze also communicates the intensity of feelings. For example, couples who say they are in love spend more time gazing at each other than other couples do (Patterson, 1988). Culture affects patterns of eye contact. For example, Americans get annoyed with people from Asian cultures because they look less directly at the others during social interactions. On the other hand, people from Arab countries get frustrated with Americans because they gaze at them less than they are used to.

Facial expressions are also more effective in sending deceptive messages than with other areas of the body. Recall when we play “bluff” with playing cards and try hard not to reveal the happiness or dismay on the set of cards we get by controlling our facial expressions. Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen have identified six distinctive facial expressions that correspond with six basic emotions, namely, anger, fear, disgust, happiness, sadness and surprise. Researches conducted by Rosenberg and Ekman (1994) show that the facial expressions conveying these six emotions appear to be universal and individuals from a variety of cultures are able to identify them correctly. A good communicator uses the face to tell a story. Videotaping yourself as you speak can help you identify your natural facial expressions when you speak.

Let us also understand about other non-verbal variables such as voice, touch, physical attractiveness and time that play a crucial role too.

e) Voice

The study of the communicative aspects of the voice is known as *vocalics* or the study of *paralanguage*. The way a message is spoken can give the same word or sentences many meanings. For example, note how many meanings come from a single sentence just by shifting the emphasis from one word to another through our voice. Consider a sentence, “This is an awesome movie”. The words in italics are the ones that are stressed more through our voice, changing the meaning of the sentence.

This is an awesome movie.

(Not just any movie, but this one in specific)

This is an *awesome* movie.

(This movie is extremely impressive or inspiring)

This is an awesome *movie*.

(It is not a drama or a serial, it is a movie)

Nowadays even in cyberspace communication, internet users frequently use various substitutes for the paralanguage cues used in spoken communication. For instance, the use of capital letters to put more emphasis (“I want to WORK now” or “I had a PAINFUL surgery”). Even usage of emotional expressions has become a common practice and thus the frequent use of punctuation marks like :-) for happiness or :- (for depicting sadness.

f) Touch

The study of the communicative aspects of touch is known as *haptics*. It is the earliest and probably the most basic form of communication. Touch takes many forms and can express a variety of meanings such as support and comfort. The extraordinary function of touch strengthens the relationship between parent and child, husband and wife, sister and brother and so on. Depending on our interpersonal relationships with others, the way we touch and the amount we touch serve different functions. It is further dependent on the situation and the culture in which the individual lives. Studies have shown that body contact is less frequent among North Americans, British and Germans than among individuals in other cultures. Touch behaviour also differs between males and females. Females usually are seen as more touch-oriented than males. Women typically perceive touch to be an expressive behaviour signifying affection or support, whereas men often view touch as an instrumental behaviour used to assert power or to show sexual interest. These gender differences in the meaning of touch can contribute to misunderstandings. In the workplace, touching is more likely to be perceived as sexual harassment by women than by men.

g) Space

The study of the communicative aspects of space is known as *proxemics*. The way a person uses space, is determined by the dictates of that individual’s cultural values. Whether we know it or not, but we spend a lot of time negotiating the space we share with others in the environment. Look at your own surroundings and experience how people strive for their own space. Say for instance, your neighbours may use hedge or metallic fencing to demarcate the area that belongs to them or a school child may put stacks of books in the middle of a table in the

library to define his boundary from others. Like other aspects of non-verbal communication, personal distance can convey information about status. People of similar status tend to stand closer together than people whose status is unequal.

h) Time

The study of the communicative aspects of time is called *chronemics*. Much of our communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is a result of a time schedule. We see the importance of time in everyone's life and for every task. We follow a specific routine, which starts from the time we wake up till we go to sleep. The way we use time depicts the way we feel about ideas and people. In India, it is not unusual to see people not arriving on time for a party or meeting. It sends a very negative message about individual's behaviour and may be considered very unprofessional in cultures like the United States or British.

i) Physical Appearance

The first means of communicating a message to anyone is through our physical appearance. The various elements of physical appearance that send potential message to others include body size, shape, hair, skin, height, weight, clothing and accessories. Each of these aspects makes a powerful impact on our communication with others. Generally, attractive people have a better edge on the unattractive people and consciously or unconsciously, we may also like to talk to people with groomed personalities than the ones who fall short of it. For example, people take care of minute details on their clothing and appearance before appearing for job interviews. Brides spend months and hours to look good. These are obvious examples of how people intentionally convert specific meaning into their dress or looks. Wearing something inappropriate or too revealing or cute can draw attention away from your speech.

Verbal and non-verbal communication should complement each other in order to emphasize the emotion, sincerity and heart behind your message. So far you have learnt how we can understand non-verbal messages. Just an understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication is not sufficient. You should also develop the art of conversation.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Select the appropriate answer for the following questions:

- 1) Which of the following is NOT one of the three basic controls of verbal communication?
a) Volume b) Appearance c) Rate d) Pitch
- 2) Non-verbal communication is communication that we
a) Hear b) See c) Feel d) Enjoy
- 3) Which of the following is an aspect of non-verbal communication?
a) Movement b) Eye contact c) Facial expressions d) All of the above
- 4) Verbal and non-verbal communication should _____ each other.
a) contradict b) complement c) contrast d) coexist with

12.6 MODELS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

12.6.1 Johari Window

The Johari Window is one of the communication models that can be used to help people better understand their interpersonal communication and relationships. It was created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955 in the United States. The word “Johari” comes from Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. This tool helps the individual learn about herself or himself and come to terms with personal issues with the help of feedback from others.

Using the Johari model, the person is represented by a four-pane or quadrant window. Each of these contains and represents personal information— feelings, motivation — about the person, and shows whether the information is known or not known by the person or other people.

The four quadrants are:

- 1) **Open Area:** What is known to the person about herself or himself and is also known to others.
- 2) **Blind Area, or “Blind Spot”:** What is unknown to the person about herself or himself but which others know.
- 3) **Hidden or Avoided Area:** What the person knows about herself or himself that others do not.
- 4) **Unknown Area:** What is unknown to the person about herself or himself and is also unknown to others.

12.6.2 Knapp’s Relationship Escalation Model

Knapp’s Relationship Escalation Model describes many types of relationships such as romantic couples, friends, and business partners. It has five stages, namely initiation, experimenting, intensifying, integration and bonding.

Initiation stage is the shortest stage amongst all the stages. It ranges from 10-15 seconds. Individuals in this stage are interested in making favourable impressions on each other. This can be observed in mannerisms of each other and through greetings. In **experimenting stage** individuals ask questions about each other and decide if they wish to continue the relationship. Many relationships end at the level of experimentation. In **intensifying stage** relationship becomes less formal and individuals start disclosing about themselves and make commitments to the relationship. After the intensifying stage people move to the stage of **integration**. They begin to do things together and a shared relational identity starts to form in this stage. The last stage is known as **bonding**. Not all relationships reach this level. This is a formal stage and sometimes legal announcement of the relationship is made; for instance, a marriage or a business partnership agreement.

12.7 TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

12.7.1 Conversational Skills

Conversation is a skill. You must have noticed how easy it is for some people to start a conversation with strangers; others however take their time before they

become comfortable. Don't panic if you are amongst the latter group. Conversation skills can be learnt and the following should in particular be focused upon (McKay et. al., 1995):

- 1) Give to others what you would like to receive from them. In other words, give others your attention and respect and let them know that you like them. Relationships are mostly based on "give and take" principle. If you expect that your friends and family should treat you well, you should also treat them in the same way. If you use abusive language or avoid them through non-verbal means, it is likely that they would do the same in the long run or may simply avoid you by minimizing contact.
- 2) Second, focus on the other person instead of yourself. Keep your attention focussed on what the person is saying, rather than think about how you look, what you are going to say next, or winning the argument. Too much obsession with your own assests and behaviour may not help you to expand your circle comprising friends and family.
- 3) Third, as we have discussed earlier, use non-verbal cues to communicate your interest in the other person. Like you, others also find it easier to interact with a person who signals friendliness. A welcoming smile can make a big difference in initial contact.

12.7.2 Effective Listening

Listening is the highest form of communication. In general, people tend to think more of speaking and less of listening. We rarely receive any training on how to listen but reading, writing and speaking are taught in abundance. Always remember effective listening is crucial for effective communication.

12.7.3 Forms of Listening

There are five main forms of listening, which are discussed below:

Ignoring: This type of listening occurs when the listener is not attentive to the message, as she or he is otherwise preoccupied and unwilling to receive a message. This may happen when you are either not interested in the topic of discussion or preoccupied with other thoughts in mind.

Pretending: This kind of listening occurs when the speaker is in a higher position and the listener cannot ignore her or him. She or he pretends to listen, even when the message is boring or irrelevant. Sometimes it may be followed by nodding your head in agreement or maintaining eye contact to show attentiveness.

Selective listening: It occurs when the listener picks up only those parts of the message that interest her or him and ignores the rest of the message. Most people use this form of listening while attending a public gathering or getting information from a salesperson on certain products and so on.

Attentive listening: It occurs when the listener not only listens and is able to answer questions, but also understands the significance of the message. This is an important form of listening, as attentive listening lends to understanding the situation well.

Empathic listening: It occurs when the listener does not necessarily agree with the speaker, but deeply understands that person emotionally and intellectually.

This is the highest form of listening and is often referred to as being in “someone’s shoes”. This could be observed in a conversation between two people on, for instance, sharing incidences that led to break up between husband and wife, failing in examination due to multiple familial crisis situations during the year and so on.

Thus to be a good listener, you need to keep a few points in mind. Let us take a look at these pointers.

12.7.4 Pointers for Effective Listening

First, non-verbal cues are very important in communicating your interest in the speaker and vice versa. As we have also noted earlier, posture, eye contact, facial expressions are all important means of communication. Any odd variation in the non-verbal cues indicates your disinterest in the topic. You would not like to communicate to a person who is paying less attention to you and consistently looking at each passer by or who interrupts your speech by unacceptable gestures.

Engaging in active listening is very important for better communication, as it would further allow you to evaluate all pros and cons. This may also involve clarifying the content that you may not have understood or which was confusing. For instance, depending on the conversation topic you may ask, “Were you travelling through train or bus?” or “Did your child suffer a fall from a bicycle or a motorbike?”. Clarification would indicate to the speaker that you were listening and interested in her or him.

Good listening also involves allowing the person to complete their statements rather than interrupting them in the middle, assuming you know what they intend to say next. For instance, a teacher may stop the student in responding to a question if she or he fumbles or stutters whilst explaining a concept. As a good listener, individuals should allow others to express their thought well.

12.8 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

There are many barriers to communication. These barriers to effective communication could be in the sender, receiver or sometimes in both. These barriers can stall or distort communication; therefore, attention must be paid to overcome these barriers. Communication barriers arise when people view things with different attitudes.

There are people who have a judgemental attitude and which gets reflected through their excessive analysis, bossiness, name-calling, ridiculing, making value-based comments and judgements, moralising or ignoring. Miscommunication and misperceptions are likely to occur in situations where people discuss on topics they feel strongly about. In these situations people may not be able to take others, point of view in any case, thus leading to miscommunication. Due to the fear of being hurt, evaluated or controlled by others, people also become defensive. Effective listening is one alternative to avoid such miscommunication.

Some people reflect that they know everything. It gets reflected through advising, moralising, ordering, patronising, threatening or lecturing. This form of behaviour often inhibits people from sharing their concerns and experiences.

Diverting the issue, using excessive logic, offhanded assurances, half-listening, not making eye contact or being flippant are ways depicting unconcerned attitude of people. There is yet another category of people who are so preoccupied with self that they rarely listen to others attentively. They may cut the conversation in between and start sharing about their own experiences, problems or concerns. Everywhere in the world people want to be heard. Everyone needs someone with whom they can share their sorrow and happiness. Communication would be limited or ignored with individuals who are consistently preoccupied with self.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Describe the following:

a) Principles of non-verbal communication with examples.

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b) Barriers to effective communication.

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12.9 LET US SUM UP

Communication is an essential part of human relationships. Effective communication enhances physical health as well as social and emotional well being of individuals. There are two views on interpersonal communication. It can be quantitatively described in terms of number of people involved or qualitatively by the nature of interaction between them. In a qualitative sense, interpersonal relationships are unique, irreplaceable, inescapable, irreversible, complex and contextual. Effective communication can be learnt with practice. Communication competence is the ability to get what you are seeking from others in a manner that maintains the relationships on terms that are acceptable to all parties. Competence varies from situation to situation. The effective communicators choose the best behaviour from various alternatives and perform it skillfully. Communication is both verbal and non-verbal and the value of these two ways of communicating comes from understanding their differences. An understanding of non-verbal language helps in understanding self and others better. Non-verbal communication complements, contradicts, accents, repeats, regulates and substitutes the verbal message and thus is used in combination to produce meaning. Besides, there are various elements of non-verbal communication that play a significant role in communication. These include body orientation, posture, gestures, facial and eye expressions. Other

non-verbal variables such as voice, touch, time, space and physical attractiveness play a crucial role too. Communication skills and effective listening are both an art. Both can be improved with consistent practice and efforts. Lastly, there are various barriers to effective communication. Judgemental, know-it-all, and unconcerned attitudes towards the speaker are some of the obstacles in the way to effective communication.

12.10 GLOSSARY

Accenting	: Non-verbal behaviours that emphasize part of a verbal message.
Chronemics	: The study of how humans use and structure time.
Communication	: A continuous, transactional process involving participants who occupy different but overlapping environments and create relationships through the exchange of messages, many of which are affected by external, physiological, and psychological noise.
Communication competence	: The ability to accomplish one's personal goals in a manner that maintains a relationship on terms that are acceptable to all parties.
Complementing	: Non-verbal behaviours that reinforces verbal message.
Contradicting	: Non-verbal behaviour that is inconsistent with a verbal message.
Double message	: Contradiction between a verbal message and one or more non-verbal cues.
Dyads	: Two individuals communicating. The interaction may or may not be interpretive in nature.
Emblems	: Deliberate non-verbal behaviours with precise meanings, known to virtually all members of a cultural group.
Gestures	: Motions of the body, usually hands or arms, that have communicative value.
Haptics	: The study of the communicative aspects of touch.
Illustrators	: Non-verbal behaviours that accompany and support verbal messages.
Interpersonal relation	: An association in which the parties meet each other's social needs to a greater or lesser degree.

Kinesics	: The study of the communicative aspects of gestures and bodily movements.
Non-verbal communication	: The process of one person stimulating meaning in the mind of another person or persons by means of non-verbal messages.
Posture	: The way in which individuals carry themselves – erect, humping and so on.
Paralanguage	: Nonlinguistic means of vocal expression like rate, pitch, tone, and so on.
Regulating	: The use of a non-verbal message to coordinate, manage, or regulate verbal interactions.
Repeating	: The use of a non-verbal message that repeats the verbal message, but can also stand alone and still have the same meaning as the verbal message.
Substituting	: It is the use of a non-verbal message in place of a verbal message.

12.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Communication can be defined as a process of meaningful interaction whereby a person not only sends but also receives and understands a message. Communication is a two-way process. It has a transmitter and a receiver. Therefore, it is essential for facts to be transmitted in such a manner that the meaning intended is conveyed and the receiver understands the use of the message. For example, in India, people fold their hands in greeting. In Japan, people bow from the waist. In Pakistan, people touch their forehead with the right hand.
- 2) Interpersonal communication is the process through which people create and manage their relationships, exercising mutual responsibility in creating meaning. A quantitative definition of interpersonal communication includes any interaction between two people, usually face to face. Using a qualitative definition, interpersonal communication occurs when people treat one another as unique individuals, regardless of the context in which the interaction occurs or the number of people involved.
- 3)
 - i) three, volume, rate, pitch
 - ii) volume
 - iii) rate
 - iv) pitch

- 1) b
- 2) b
- 3) d
- 4) b

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

a) Principles of non-verbal communication:

- i) **Non-verbal communication is multi channeled:** Most verbal messages like words, sentences and paragraphs reach us one at a time. However, non-verbal messages bombard us simultaneously from a multitude of channels. For instance, overwhelming facial expressions, postures, gestures of people travelling on a bus or train.
- ii) **Non-verbal communication is ambiguous:** Non-verbal cues are informative but they are most reliable when accompanied by verbal messages and embedded in a familiar cultural and social context (Berry et al., 1994). For instance, a frown may indicate that your idea is not clear to the audience or it may also depict disagreement with your viewpoint.
- iii) **Non-verbal communication conveys emotions:** Non-verbal communication is very effective in communicating emotions. People demonstrate their positive feelings for others by being more close, or by just holding their hands.
- iv) **Non-verbal communication is continuous:** Unlike verbal communication, non-verbal communication is never ending and continuous. Speaking or writing has a clear beginning or end but non-verbal messages like your posture, gestures or expressions are endless.
- v) **Non-verbal communication has more impact:** When we get exposed to both verbal and non-verbal messages, non-verbal signals are more powerful and have more impact on our behaviour. In a situation like appearing for a job, non-verbal cues are given more weightage to understand the message.
- vi) **Non-verbal communication is unconscious:** Non-verbal communication happens unconsciously and cannot be hidden beyond a level. For instance, your shivering hands during your presentation may contradict your bold and confident voice and reveal your state of nervousness.
- vii) **Non-verbal communication is culture specific:** Non-verbal signals are different in different cultures. Every culture has its own unique way of communicating non-verbally. For instance, people of European culture tend to say hello or make a firm handshake to greet people than people of Asian origin. There is lot of variability amongst Asians as well. For instance, a Japanese may bow but an Indian may join both hands to show gratitude.

Non-verbal communication occurs jointly with verbal communication.

- b) There are many barriers to communication. These barriers to effective communication could be in the sender, receiver or sometimes in both. These barriers can stall or distort communication; therefore, attention must be paid to overcome these barriers. Communication barriers arise when people view things with a different attitude. There are people who have a judgemental attitude which gets reflected through their excessive analysis, bossiness, name-calling, ridiculing, making value-based comments and judgements, moralising or ignoring. Some people reflect that they know every thing. It gets reflected through advising, moralising, ordering, patronising, threatening or lecturing. This form of behaviour often inhibits people from sharing their concerns and experiences. Communication can also be limited or ignored with individuals who are consistently preoccupied with self.

12.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) How will you define an effective communicator? Briefly explain the different strategies used for competent communication.
- 2) What is interpersonal communication? Describe the characteristics of quality interpersonal communication.
- 3) Describe the principles and functions of non-verbal communication.

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UNIT 13 INTERFACE BETWEEN FAMILY AND WORKPLACE

Structure

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Linkages between Family and Work Place
 - 13.2.1 Decisions and Choices Related to Careers and Work
 - 13.2.2 Rising Nature of Women's Education and Employment
- 13.3 Work Life Impacting Family Life
 - 13.3.1 Work Impacting Personal Life Decisions
 - 13.3.2 Work Spilling Over Family Life
 - 13.3.3 Work Family Conflict and Related Stress
 - 13.3.4 Changes at Work Front Influencing Family
- 13.4 Influence of Family Life on Work
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- 13.8 Unit End Questions
- 13.9 Further Readings and References

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society the nature of work in varied sectors is undergoing profound transformation. Changes due to technological advancement in areas of computerisation and telecommunication, growing consumerism, diversification of production systems and acute alteration in the organisational structures have created new pressures and new opportunities that are impacting different aspects of an individual's life. The pressures and opportunities have increased interest in work as a setting for human development. Technological and industrial developments have greatly increased the rate of reorganisation of social environments; this has in ways impacted the family at the micro level. The extraordinary development of modern formal organisations has created a situation in which most adults invest the major part of their time and energy at their workplace. In this context it becomes pertinent to understand the linkages between family and workplace and this Unit focuses on these linkages.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the complex interconnections between family and work life;

- Explain how family and work life impact upon each other; and
- Discuss work and family issues in different stages of life.

13.2 LINKAGES BETWEEN FAMILY AND WORK PLACE

Though workplace and family are two separate spheres, there are broad connections and linkages between them that need to be understood. In fact work and family are more than just interconnected domains of life. They are sources of meanings and identity to which men and women connect. Both positive and negative influences can flow between these two spheres and the influences can be bi-directional.

13.2.1 Decisions and Choices Related to Careers and Work

Work is necessary to generate income for survival. The type and structure of work are important elements in understanding the processes and interactions surrounding work life. Broadly work can be classified into unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour. In contemporary society skilled labour is in demand, which in turn influences occupational choice of individuals. Both the rural and urban context needs to be focussed upon as work opportunities and the type of work generated in these areas is different. Urban economies present diverse range of employment opportunities, whereas rural economies are simple and characterised by farming, handloom and other subsidiary farm related work activities.

We will first begin by discussing the decisions related to entry into particular occupations. Choices related to type of work differ according to gender and class. Broadly speaking, all men need to work to earn a living, whereas most women have a choice of either joining paid work or not joining it. Society on the whole, still perceives the role of the homemaker as the domain of the women's primary responsibility, while the work role is considered to be the domain of the male. Men who abdicate the primary role of a breadwinner are neither admired nor tolerated by most segments of our society. Thus, work choices depend largely on the alternatives that exist in the social environment and on cultural values and attitudes toward those alternatives. Even the decisions to work are dependent on factors such as dependent members in the family, spousal or parental work, education, financial condition and individual preferences. In the present socio-economic environment it has become mandatory for both the spouses to work and generate more income for family and hence there are conflicting demands and expectations on them from both the spheres.

13.2.2 Rising Nature of Women's Education and Employment

Over the past years the gender differences in levels of education are declining in India. More number of girls are gaining high school education and an increasing number of them are entering higher educational institutions. This in turn has led to an increase in the proportion of women in paid work. The traditional family form of married couple with children and with wife not in the work sector is inclined to decrease in the coming years. Earlier only the husband earned an income and he alone moved between the two worlds. However, for many contemporary families the interface of work and family involves at least two workplaces. Thus both, husbands' and wives' work combine to influence their family activities, roles

and relationships. Though one would expect change in the sex-role attitudes of both men and women, in India couples continue subscribing to traditional gender roles. With more women stepping out to work, men as well as women are confronted with the 'balancing act' that follows due to their involvement in family and paid work domains. The following sections will give you an insight into the growing reciprocal transactions between family and work fronts.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Fill up the blanks:

- i) Work can be classified into and labour.
- ii) Man who abdicate the primary role of a are neither admired nor tolerated by most segments of our society.
- iii) Earlier only the earned an income and he alone moved between the two worlds.

13.3 WORK LIFE IMPACTING FAMILY LIFE

Work and family represent two of the most central realms of adult life. Both these spheres are no more exclusive domains. They are closely interconnected domains of human life. Fundamental changes are visible in the structure of work and in family roles due to increasing prevalence of dual earner couples, the influx of women into work force and family arrangements that deviate from traditional gender-based roles. Work-family interface is multi-dimensional, having relevance to one's career, home, partner, children, education and leisure time.

13.3.1 Work Impacting Personal Life Decisions

Let us understand how paid work can have an impact on people's personal lives. Place of work becomes the sphere wherein an individual spends most of her or his time and hence it is bound to influence the personal life of people. Personal decisions regarding marriage, children and lifestyle choices are determined by paid work of an individual. Personal decisions of marriage may be postponed as those who are at the threshold of their careers would want to first build their career before embarking upon the marital path. This has led to increase in the age of marriage for both women and men. Women from all classes too are joining the work force, which has influenced their decisions to not only postpone marriage, but has influenced their decisions regarding children. Couples who are career oriented may even decide to delay having children. For couples having high paid, demanding careers, remaining childless voluntarily is a common option today. These couples; popularly known as 'Dinks' — 'Double income no kids', are either delaying childbirth or decide to remain voluntarily childless so that they can devote their time and energies to their work.

Let us understand this aspect through an example. Sonal is 29 years of age and is working in a multinational company as a manager. Her husband, Vinay, is 32 years of age and, is a Regional Bank manager. Both of them have extremely demanding careers. They are pressurised by family and friends to have a baby since they have been married for four years. Initially they decided not to have a

baby for a couple of years but now both are unwilling to take on the added responsibility of a baby since they are at the crucial juncture of their careers. They are now contemplating to remain childless so that they can devote their time and energy to their careers. It is essential to note here that even though maternity leave can be availed by expectant mothers, most of the organisations expect the employee to resume duties within a period of three to four months. Conversely, women working in unorganised sectors may have no choice but to resume work shortly as commonly seen at construction sites. Without the support of family members it becomes very difficult for women to join paid work leaving the infant for longer duration. With reference to the organised sectors of India, the concept of paternity leave is yet to be established, though it is a common aspect in the West. In India, even today paid work of women is considered secondary to their primary responsibility of household and family. Till recently employment of women was regarded as a social problem with negative consequences for the well being of the children and for marital relationship.

Further, with the rising prevalence of dual earner couples today, even the choice of living in joint or nuclear families is an option the couples may want to exercise. For dual earner couples with children; living with in-laws becomes a more practical living arrangement even though it may not be the most preferred option. Since looking after young children is a full time responsibility, having elders around can reduce the responsibility, of the working parents. Many mothers with young children today opt for part time jobs or jobs with flexible timings. For these women, instead of forgoing paid work completely it becomes necessary to balance work and family within the limited time at hand.

Let us look at an example of dual earner couple from middle class. Vijay and Smita are working couple with two children; age 6 and 3 years. They all live in a joint family with Vijay's parents. Though Smita does not get along with her mother-in-law, she does not want to move into a separate home. She works as a school teacher. She knows that her children are taken care of when she goes to work. She likes her teaching job and the timings are convenient for her to take care of other household responsibilities. Her decision to stay in the joint family is a matter of convenience.

Combining paid work with family responsibilities is typical of many women from low-income groups, in rural as well as urban areas. In many of these low-income families it is mandatory for more number of family members to bring in income to cover their expenses. In most of these families the burden of handling paid work along with household and family responsibilities lies with women of the family. For women from low income families the alternatives for paid work are limited. Thus, personal decisions regarding marriage, children, and living arrangement may also be influenced by the paid work one is involved in .

Let us now focus on how work impacts family life.

13.3.2 Work Spilling Over Family Life

Let us begin by defining the term '*spillover*'. Spillover is defined as the reciprocal tension between the roles and obligations of being a family member such as spouse or parent, on the one hand, and an employee on the other. Work spillover occurs when emotions, attitudes, behaviour and work generated in the workplace is carried over into family life, or when work limits time spent with family.

How does work spillover family life? There are three processes that can negatively interfere with home life. One is, involvement in one's paid work, which means the amount of 'time' spent at work and away from home. Time spent at work reduces time available for family roles. For instance, it can be particularly stressful when work demands force people to miss important family events such as a child's award ceremony or spouse's birthday party. The second way work can spillover is through the 'psychological' absorption of the worker. The worker becomes mentally preoccupied with work concerns, even when not at work. For example, a mother or father may not be able to help a child with their project work due to preoccupation with work related issues. Finally, the physical and mental challenges of work can fatigue the individual; hence less energy is available for non-work activities. In addition to mental fatigue, irritability and physical exhaustion can accompany prolonged conflicts in the interface of work and family.

Work spill can affect the spousal relationship, parent-child relationship, involvement in household responsibilities and even leisure time activities. Since each individual performs multiple roles, there is bound to be role conflict. Working persons have too much to do and too little time in which to do it. Family members, who are working, most often experience an overload and conflict due to multiple roles. For instance, a working woman may have to manage the demands of the paid work along with the demands from the home by children, in-laws and other family members if any, and also attend to daily household chores.

To illustrate the work spillover, we can look at the situation in the following example. Mahesh works as an engineer in an organisation. His wife Swati is a chartered accountant. Both of them have taxing jobs. Usually Swati brings work home if she comes home earlier than seven in the evening. Their daughters are in sixth and eighth standard. They need help in their studies which Mahesh and Swati are capable of doing. But they are unable to pay attention to their daughters as Mahesh comes home very late from work and Swati has other household responsibilities to attend to. Swati gets irritable if disturbed by the daughters while cooking for the family in the evenings. Whereas Mahesh even when at home is constantly on phone solving work related issues. Even when they are at home they tend to be preoccupied with paid work, which minimizes their interaction with each other and with their daughters. Apparently there is a growing communication gap between the members of the family.

Researches have shown that working women; particularly mothers of preschool children, experience the most work-family problems. These women have insufficient time to meet adequately both work and family demands. Most of the time women feel drained out and fatigued. Employed women may use certain strategies to cope with such situations. They may reduce time spent doing housework, increase efficiency, some may give up leisure time activities. Some of the common problems that employed family members experience are in areas of childcare, elder care, work timing, job demands, supervisory relationship and non-supportive organisational culture.

The form work-family conflict may take is also likely to vary by social class and the number of employed adults in the family.

13.3.3 Work Family Conflict and Related Stress

Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family role demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other. Due to incompatibility of these roles,

strain and stress occurs. There can also be dissatisfaction, tension, anxiety and fatigue experienced by members of the family in relation to the fulfillment of roles in both the spheres of life. The way in which work stress is managed may have detrimental effects on worker's well-being and health that can adversely affect the families. Work stress experienced by working members can be characterised as exposure to physical and psychological strain at work place. It can be understood as demanding nature of work that varies from day to day or even hour to hour. Job stress can have negative impact on family relationships. It is commonly seen that there is displacement of angry emotional reactions from chronically stressful work experiences onto family members. There are instances of parents losing their temper on their children due to pressures from work place. However, not all who undergo stressful work situations vent their frustrations on family members. However, it may even lead to preoccupation with work-related problems and needs. This may lead to more number of hours spent for work and a subsequent loss of intimacy, companionship and shared recreational time with family. Chronic work stress may reduce the ability to be responsive to the feelings and needs of a child or spouse. It may even make the person less capable of coping effectively with problems at home. Ultimately job stress may lead to withdrawal from family life and becoming less empathetic and less affective toward family members.

Let us understand this through an example reflecting the work related stress affecting family life. Ramesh is a factory labourer supporting his wife, children, aged parents and his unmarried sister. He usually does overtime to earn extra income, as his wage does not suffice the expenses. His supervisor is authoritarian and offensive to most of the workers and Ramesh does not like to work under him. Ramesh is overburdened which is taking its toll on his mental and physical health. He is unsatisfied with his work and is stressed about his interaction with his supervisor. He is irritable and angry when at home. He is feeling detached from his family.

Another concept that explains a form of work-family conflict is 'behaviour-based conflict'. *Behaviour-based conflict* occurs when behaviours developed in one domain cascade onto the other domain. The person is unable to adjust behaviour when moving between domains. For example, a confrontational approach to solving work problems may be applied inappropriately to family problems. For example, a father may become offensive toward his child as his authority at work place disposes him to interact with his children in that manner. Thus behaviour-based conflict signifies a form of spillover in which behaviour developed in one domain influences behaviour in the other and usually the transferred behaviour inhibits role performance in the latter domain.

Although the effects of work stress upon the family are invariably negative, the potential for positive effects of work stress exist. It is possible that a worker may seek to counteract negative experiences at work by behaving in opposite ways at home. For example, an employee with a lot of stress from work place may in fact attempt to increase positive family interactions. People may even try to shut out the negative work experiences and gain positive energy from family relations. In this sense, the family may provide compensations for shortcomings at work place. Research has shown that job satisfaction can have a positive influence on the family.

13.3.4 Changes at Work Front Influencing Family

Work related life event such as transfer, migration or even unemployment could

have drastic effect on the family. Transfer with related migration may lead to the family uprooting itself from one place and then undergoing the process of settling in a new place. This can be strenuous especially if the couple has young school going children. The other alternative in such a situation is that the spouse who gets transferred moves to the new place without the family. This can cause strain on the spousal and parent-child relationship. The transferred spouse, usually the male member will be unavailable for carrying out familial responsibilities. This would lead to one spouse handling most of the family and household related tasks. The demands and strain on one spouse can have harmful effect on health and mental state of the person, more so if the spouse is also working. In addition, the face-to-face interaction between the transferred parent and child will reduce and the child may suffer from anxiety related to the parent who is away from home for long duration. For instance, Suresh who was an agricultural labourer has migrated to the city from his village for work. Back home in his village is his old mother, wife and three children. He migrated to the city a few years back and visits his family only twice a year. In his last visit his youngest son was not able to relate to him as a father. His family has to accept his long absence from home, as he cannot afford to take them with him to the city. There is an underlying tension between him and his wife that is affecting their spousal intimacy and relationship.

Another major occupational life event that can cause trouble in the family is involuntary unemployment. Involuntary unemployment leads to increase in emotional strain and its effects are borne by the worker and the family. Research has shown that involuntary unemployment makes the family member emotionally unavailable to her or his family and less effective in carrying out family responsibilities. There is likely to be anxiety, depression and more conflicted family environment. In families where the sole earner is temporarily unemployed can cause greater distress and there would be a drastic change in the family's standard of living. There is the possibility of deterioration in parent-child relationship in case of prolonged unemployment, which occasionally may result in spousal and child abuse.

It must be noted that changes at work place such as promotion, perks and incentives can have a positive influence on the employee and her or his family. This positive episode at work front may prove to be beneficial for the individual's self esteem which in turn would result in positive familial relations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) State 'True' or 'False' :

- i) Personal decisions regarding marriage, children and living arrangement are not influenced by the paid work one is involved in. ____
- ii) Work skill can affect the spousal relationship and parent-child relationship. ____
- iii) Chronic work stress may reduce the ability to be responsive to the feelings and needs of a child or spouse. ____
- iv) Involuntary employment leads to increase in emotional strain and its effects are borne by the worker and the family. ____

13.4 INFLUENCE OF FAMILY LIFE ON WORK

Work-family connections are viewed as systems of exchange of personal resources including commitment, skills and energies, in return for economic security, status and a sense of purpose and identity. The nature of the exchange varies by structure of the family and the stage of the family cycle. There are reciprocal influences and interconnections between work and family. Family situations can define work orientation, motivations, ability, emotional energy and the demands people bring to work place. There can even be 'family spillover' on work. '*Family spillover*' occurs when family responsibilities encroach on workers' attitudes, capabilities or energies making it more difficult for them to meet job obligations.

In the following section we will try to understand how family life exerts an influence on the work domain.

13.4.1 Variations in Family Forms and its Influence on Work Life

There are varied family forms such as joint, nuclear, single parent, dual earner, women headed household and migrant families. Each family form would have a set of positive and negative influences on its working members. Let us examine them.

Joint family is regarded as an ideal type of family in the Indian society. Since number of family members is large, there is need for more earning members especially in the middle and lower income groups. In such families there can be a support from other members for childcare and household tasks if the couple are working. At the same time it may even increase the burden of the household work and care for the children and elderly. This can lead to manifold increase in the workload for the women of the family. Many times women may be forced to allow family tasks and responsibilities to intrude on their paid work, while men are less inclined to do so. This can cause disruption and stress at the work place since managing both the domains satisfactorily may be difficult.

In families where there are young children, the responsibilities of the family members increase. Members of nuclear family with children have to depend on other support systems for majority of their work if both the parents are working. Working women have to walk the tight rope and fulfill their roles and responsibilities satisfactorily. Inability to satisfactorily fulfill their traditionally accepted 'primary role' of a homemaker may cause anxiety and lead to low self-esteem. Such feelings will have repercussions on the work performance. Whereas in dual earning nuclear families, there is role confusion as traditional role distribution of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers is undergoing transformation. Since women too are working, there are expectations from the spouse to support and help in household responsibilities. However, research indicates that there is relatively very little male participation in childcare and housework. This can cause tensions and conflicts in spousal relationship. These conflicts can have a negative impact on the work performance.

To understand, this let us look at the following illustration. Dual earner couple, Sohail and Saira have two school going children. Both have to leave at nine in the morning for their respective offices. The morning time is rush hour time, as the children have to catch their school bus by seven thirty. Saira wakes up at five

thirty to make breakfast, lunch, to bathe, feed and to get the children ready for school. She would like some help from Sohail in the morning but he wakes up at seven fifteen just in time to drop the kids off to the bus stop. He then leisurely reads the morning paper while Saira cleans up, packs their lunch boxes and gives Sohail tea and breakfast before rushing to get ready for office. The evening scene is no different. Saira is exhausted by lunchtime and her afternoon work in the office gets affected. The above illustration depicts a typical nuclear dual earner family of India. With women entering the workforce there are expectations from the spouse to share roles and responsibilities at the home front. If the expectations are unmet it can lead to conflicts between the couple and this can have an impact on their work life as well.

13.4.2 Influence of Life Events on the Family and Work Life

The varied occurrences in an individual's life entailed by transitions from initial years of employment to retirement lead to a sequence of experiences. Thus each stage in life may bring changes with it that influence the work sphere of the individual. Life events such as birth and death can also have an impact on work. The birth of a new infant brings in new roles and responsibilities for parents. Childcare is considered the primary responsibility of mothers. If she has been working prior to the birth of her baby, she may either have to leave her job or temporarily discontinue paid work. At times women may pick up part time jobs if children are in school going age. It should be noted that such a choice may not be available to women from lower economic groups for whom joining paid work almost immediately becomes a priority as it is necessary to bring in the much needed income. For instance, pregnant domestic helpers are usually seen working almost till the delivery phase is near, also they resume paid work much sooner due to the financial pressures on the family. This would risk their as well as the infant's health. Flexibility of time and congenial working atmosphere is an important element in such circumstances.

13.4.3 Effective Family-Work Balance

Research has confirmed the existence of work-to-family and family-to-work spillover and the importance of healthy work-family interface for both the domains. Work may provide benefits such as status, ego gratification, increased self-esteem and even financial stability, nevertheless its negative impact is evident through the role strain and stress caused by it. Both family and work domains provide meaning and identity to individuals. However couples have to continuously negotiate the two spheres so as to attain balance between the two. Couples can adopt a variety of adaptive strategies, including the division of housework or hiring outside help. In the Indian context, parental, in-laws' and other social support can play a huge role in reducing the workload on the working couples. Today working members are actively trying to maintain a preferred degree of connection between work and family.

Other positive source of support comes from work-based friendships. Such friendships may have implications in one's personal as well as professional life. These friendships are an important source of support not only in work related domains but even non-work domains such as marriage and child rearing. The other support that can come from within the workplace is having a cooperative supervisor. Supportive supervisor also tends to reduce work-family stress. However,

changes toward a family-responsive work place in India have been slow. Recent changes in the work force participation rates of women point to the need for modifications not only in traditionally organised work places but even in traditional distribution of roles and responsibilities at home front. In spite of growing awareness regarding the need for family members to collaborate in household work, it is women who have a disproportionate share of the family and household responsibilities. In the current setting there is likelihood of more number of working people negotiating and balancing role enhancement against role conflict thereby trying to strike a balance between workplace and family life.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) State 'True' or 'False':

- i) Family spillover occurs when family responsibilities encroach on workers' attitude, capability and energies making it more difficult for them to meet job obligation. ()
- ii) Inability to satisfactorily fulfil their traditionally accepted primary role of a homemaker may cause anxiety and lead to low self-esteem in women. ()
- iii) The birth of new infant brings in new roles and responsibilities for parents. ()
- iv) Family and work domains provide meaning and identity to individual. ()

13.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we learnt how family and workplace are interconnected domains of life and each impacts the other in many ways. We have discussed the linkages between the two spheres keeping in mind the gender role differences. We have also looked at the strategies used by working people to balance the family and work domains.

13.6 GLOSSARY

- Behaviour-based conflict** : Occurs when behaviour developed in one-domain cascades onto the other domain. The person is unable to adjust behaviour when moving between domains.
- Family spillover** : Occurs when family responsibilities encroach on workers' attitudes, capabilities or energies making it more difficult for them to meet job obligations.
- Interface** : Place where interaction occurs between two systems.

- Work-family conflict** : A form of inter-role conflict in which work and family role demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other.
- Work spillover** : Occurs when emotions, attitudes, behaviour and work generated in the workplace is carried over into family life, or when work limits time spent with family.

13.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) i) unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled
ii) breadwinner
iii) husband/man

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) i) False
ii) True
iii) True
iv) True

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) i) True
ii) True
iii) True
iv) True

13.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain how rising nature of women's employment is influencing the interface between family and work life.
- 2) How does work spillover affect spousal and parent-child relationship?
- 3) Explain with examples the negative impact of job stress on family relationships.
- 4) Discuss the influence of changes at work front on family.
- 5) Explain the influence of joint and nuclear family form on work life.

13.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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