Identifying and Overcoming Hostility in Mediation of Interpersonal Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Thesis. The article is devoted to developing practical exercises and recommendations for reducing the level of hostility to avoid serious consequences and find constructive ways of conflict resolution, and developing a conflict mediation plan based on the conflicting parties' hostility level monitoring.

Concept. Organization of the conflicting parties behaviour monitoring, which makes it possible to recognise hostile attitudes and helps better understand how the conflict affects the interaction between the parties and what emotional reactions and motivations guide their behaviour.

Results. The concept of hostility is identified as a stable human characteristic, expressed in the tendency to have a negative attitude towards others, suspicion, aggressiveness and conflict. The psychological aspects of hostility, its impact on emotions, behaviour and perception of the conflicting parties are considered. The effectiveness of methods of establishing markers of hostility, as well as techniques of emotional and behavioural impact on the conflicting parties is analysed.

Conclusions. Successful resolution of destructive conflicts is possible only if the attitude between the parties is transformed – from hostile to cooperative. The effectiveness of counselling largely depends on the appropriately chosen format of work: both joint and separate modes of interaction have their strengths and require consideration of the specific circumstances of the conflict.

Originality. Practical tools for mediators to reduce the level of hostility between the parties to a conflict are described, including techniques of decentring, word choice, and positive attitudes.

Keywords: hostility, conflict, conflicting parties, hostility identification methods, methods to overcome hostility, conflict mediation.

Introduction

Hostility plays an important role in the development and escalation of conflicts. In particular, it leads to the intensification of negative emotions such as anger, hatred, fear, or contempt, which in turn can push conflicting parties to aggressive actions. Hostility creates a specific lens through which conflicting parties perceive each other and the situation in general: people with hostile feelings and cognitions often tend to see the other party's actions as aggression or attack, even if in reality their actions are not of that nature. When one party perceives the other as an enemy, it is more difficult to find mutual understanding or work together to achieve a common goal. All this emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing hostility during conflicts in the practice of psychology. It is important to reduce the level of hostility in time to avoid serious consequences and find constructive ways of conflict resolution. This goal can be achieved only through the organisation of high-quality monitoring of the conflicting parties' behaviour, which will make it possible to identify hostile attitudes and help better understand how the conflict affects the interaction between the parties and what emotional reactions and motivations guide their behaviour. The relevance of the study of this issue is also determined by the social and political situation in Ukraine. The research findings show that the outbreak of hostilities

on the territory of Ukraine has led to an increase in anxiety and aggression. A high level of aggression is manifested in frequent feelings of anger and a desire to harm others. A decrease in the ability to control one's aggression in tense situations leads to increased conflicts with others (Borysiuk, 2023). Identification of hostile attitudes makes it possible to adapt the approach to communication, aiming it at reducing negative emotions and dialogue facilitation. Thus, identification of hostility helps not only resolve a specific conflict but also improve the overall atmosphere of interaction, creating conditions for more constructive and healthy communication.

Theoretical Background

For a long time, hostility has not been studied as a separate phenomenon as it merges with the concept of aggressiveness. The most commonly used synonyms to the concept of hostility are such words as aggressiveness, unfriendliness, enmity, animosity, hatred, aggression, antipathy, dislike, tension, ill will, malicious joy, and others (Yehorova, 2019).

Arnold H. Buss was the first to differentiate hostility from anger and aggression. Accordingly, he understood hostility as a persistent and prolonged negative attitude of a person to the social and physical environment, while anger was interpreted as an emotional experience (Buss, 1961). Researchers note that the concept of hostility is used to emphasize cognitive and attitudinal aspects, such as antagonistic perceptions of others and the world (Berkout et al, 2019).

Thus, hostility corresponds to the cognitive component of the psyche, anger to the emotional component, and aggression to the behavioural component. Anger acts as a link connecting hostility with the instrumental components of verbal and physical aggression.

Carroll Izard examined hostility in relation to a set of affects such as anger, disgust, and contempt. Hostility can be the basis for aggression, however, like motivation, it does not always lead to the respective external behaviour. It means that hostility does not necessarily lead to aggression. For example, intense anger increases the likelihood of impulsive aggressive acts, while the dominance of disgust in the triad of hostility may lead to avoidance of the object of hostile feelings. At the same time, Izard defines hostility as a complex affective and cognitive trait or orientation of a personality that corresponds to the concept of emotional attitude (Izard, 1977). Iryna Kadievska and Halyna Wright define hostility as a person's orientation to aggression and harm to others. The scholars emphasised that hostility is formed in the process of a person's assimilation of harmful social attitudes and stereotypes and, as a result of such socialisation, and under the influence of internal psychological factors can turn into a stable character trait (Kadievska & Wright, 2022).

Martijn W. Van Teffelen and colleagues reviewed two approaches to hostility. In one-dimensional concepts hostility is viewed as a construct that includes interrelated elements:

cynical beliefs about others and the surrounding world, a tendency to interpret emotionally ambiguous situations as hostile, a state of anger, and aggressive behavior. While empirical results mostly support multidimensional concepts that treat hostility as a broad conceptual domain consisting of two or more lower-level components. The scholars point out that hostility has a multidimensional hierarchical structure. At the most abstract level, hostility is characterized by a low threshold for experiencing and reacting to an angry emotional state; at the second level, hostility is divided into hostile cognitions and the aggressive behavior; at the third level, hostility can be considered at the affective level (as anger affect) and the cognitive level (hostile intentions). At the fourth level, the behavioral component is differentiated into interpersonal (social aggression) and physical (physical aggression) components. The interpersonal component is further divided into verbal and relational aggression (van Teffelen et al., 2020).

We believe that hostility as a psychological phenomenon can be viewed in the traditional dimensions: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and personal. In emotional terms, hostility is experienced as a complex of emotions and feelings of negative modality (fear, anger, disgust, disgust, suspicion, etc.) and enjoyment of the suffering of the object of hostility. Hostility is associated with the accumulation of anger that a person has not released for some reason (Felsten & Hill, 1999).

In cognitive terms, it is a negative hostile attitude of a person towards another person (or other persons, groups), a system of extremely unfavorable assessments that can be based on previous negative experience of relationships, as well as on stereotypes and prejudices of the subject. Hostile attitudes towards someone can be manifested both actively and openly, and covertly, and usually consist of a desire to harm the person(s) who is the target of verbal and non-verbal demonstrations of unfriendliness, etc (Lisovenko & Dolinska, 2020). Hostile attitudes are manifested in a negative assessment of others, characterized by cynicism, suspicion, and distrust (Fabiansson & Denson, 2016).

The cognitive component of hostility is the attitude towards the object of hostility as an obstacle to the realization of one's own goals, an obstacle to the realization of needs and interests, something that needs to be destroyed or eliminated. The enemy is always evil, so he (she, they) is/are always attributed not only evil intentions and motives, but also negative personality traits. The enemy is always a bad person. This also includes attribution of hostile intentions, which is defined as the tendency to attribute hostile intentions to others in social situations with a negative outcome for the individual when the other person's intentions are not clear (Verhoef et al., 2019).

In the behavioral context, hostility manifests itself in actions aimed at causing harm (physical, material, moral, etc.) to the enemy or destroying it (literally or figuratively). The behavioral aspect is shaped by emotional state and cognitive beliefs and can vary from passive to active aggression.

Hostility as a personality trait is a stable human characteristic that manifests itself in a tendency to have a negative attitude towards others, suspicion, aggressiveness, and conflict. This trait manifests itself at the level of thoughts, emotions, and behavior, forming a general attitude that affects social interactions. The main individual psychological components of hostility are suspicion, resentment, and sensitivity to mistreatment (Felsten & Hill, 1999).

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of hostility can have different causes and consequences. Hostility is a multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped under the influence of personal experience, social and historical conditions, and the information environment. Stanislav Oleksiienko emphasized that a certain selective negative attitude towards someone or something is characteristic of most people. The complete absence of a hostile attitude in a person may indicate personal dysfunction or personal immaturity (Oleksiienko, 2017). At the same time, a hostile attitude complicates communication, affects interpersonal relationships, and distorts the perception of objective reality.

The feeling of hostility arises from negative experiences of communication and interaction; it is easier and faster in touchy and vengeful people (Yehorova, 2019). Most often, hostility arises in a situation of conflict when a person cannot solve a problem on their own, needs to interact with other parties, but for some reason cannot (does not know how, does not want to) organize joint activities in a constructive way. There can be many reasons for this: communication incompetence, prejudice, fear of failure, past negative experiences, inadequate self-esteem and many other factors. In general, it is not so much the reasons that matter as the result – hostility that makes a person build a fortress around himself/herself and look at others (enemies) through the sight of a weapon pointed through a loophole towards the enemy.

It is clear that such a stance does not lead to constructive problem solving, exacerbates the situation, and has destructive consequences. Therefore, it is important for people who take on the role of conciliators or counselors whose help is requested in conflict situations to be able to diagnose in clients the presence of hostile attitudes to the other parties to a conflict and overcome this attitude by turning enemies into partners in the process of problem resolution.

Method

It is possible to determine whether the client has a hostile attitude towards other parties to the conflict by analysing their description of the story and the way they evaluate the other participants (parties) to the conflict. If the client finds it difficult, one can use the narrative technique and offer each party to the conflict to create a fairy tale, ballad, poem, or story in which they would talk about their problem, their attitude towards all the participants, and their experiences. Sometimes it is easier for clients to do the sto-

rytelling (or narrative) in a written form. When analysing the stories of the parties to the conflict, the mediator can use a table that makes it easy to record important points of the story and get the idea of the relationship between the conflicting parties. If a help-seeking client, when asked about his or her request, immediately begins to talk about the problem and what the parties have already tried to do and what difficulties they have encountered, it is likely that he or she does not have a hostile attitude towards others. When a person considers others to be enemies, they begin their story with complaints and/or accusations. Therefore, for the purpose of the analysis, it is advisable to record the size and brief content of the story and compare the size of the story about the problem with the number of complaints and accusations from other parties. To this end the following table can be used.

Table 1.
The content of client's request

The problem lies in	Accusations	Complaints

Source. Authors' work.

A person's choice of words for any description depends on his or her attitude to the situation and the actors involved. Both nouns, adjectives, and verbs can be evaluative. For example, you can say that a person has "entered" the room, or you can say that he/she "barged in". And it is immediately clear whether the person in question is a friend or an enemy. Similarly, when describing the same character trait, you can call it "frugality" or "stinginess" depending on your attitude towards its bearer.

Observations indicate that in case there is hostile attitude towards partners, the client mainly focuses on describing the negative personal traits of the other parties, and talks less about their actions. To analyze this criterion, the counselor can use Table 2, in which he or she notes how and how many times the client talked about the actions of the partners and what assessments he or she made of the personal qualities and traits of the others. In the column "Actions" (positive, neutral, negative), one should mark the number of times the client's story refers to the actions of other people and what evaluative words were used to describe them (positive, neutral, or negative). For example, describing how her mother-in-law tried to help with her granddaughter's treatment, the daughter-in-law says: "*Mom brought* the medicine, even though we didn't ask her to do so," we mark the column "Actions" (positive) and the column "Personality" (positive). If this situation is described with the words: "*Antonina Fedorivna* is always *meddling with* her medications," then we put a mark in the "Actions" column (negative) and in the "Personality" column (neutral). If we hear from the client: "*It's so angry*, but it always pretends to be a *caring one*," then we put two marks in the "Actions" column (negative) and two marks in the "Personality" column (negative).

Table 2

Customer survey form for partners' actions

Actions			Personality		
Positive	Neutral	Negative	positive	neutral	negative
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total

Source. Authors' work.

If the client's story is dominated by descriptions of positive and neutral actions, positive or neutral assessments of the partner's personality, then we can assume that there is no hostility. If negative personality characteristics prevail, especially negative evaluative adjectives and verbs, expressions that degrade one's dignity, then we can be sure about hostile attitude.

To facilitate the diagnosis of hostility, one can offer the client a selection of evaluative adjectives and verbs (see Table 3) and ask him/her to use them when talking about their problem or creating a narrative. As you can see from the examples above, the list of words contains evaluative adjectives and verbs that demonstrate quite clearly the attitude of the narrator to the people he/she describes. A person who is treated neutrally "enters the room," while the enemy "barges in." A friend is "frugal," and an enemy is "stingy." This simplifies the process of assessing the meaning of the words used by clients, counting the evaluative adjectives and verbs they use, and determining whether they have a hostile attitude toward others. Certainly, these are just examples. Depending on the situation and the characteristics of the clients, one should select the words that will be offered to the clients for work.

Table 3.

Examples of definitions and verbs for clients to write narratives about their conflict situation

Definitions	Verbs
Neat, indifferent, chatterbox, reckless, fearless, whishy-washy, rebel, freedom-loving, confident, stubborn, flexible, despotic, persistent, insecure, sociable, careless, kind, person with firm beliefs, fearful, dough-face, wasteful, fussy, silent, persistent, gentle, cautious, fat, optimistic, frugal, passive, pedantic, suspicious, overweight, compliant, secretive, prudent, wimp, romantic, mobile, self-confident, stingy, obedient, shy, calm, strict, thickheaded, flattering, determined, generous	Broke in, took, made up, took away, put aside, stole, taught, dishonored, mocked, gave, overcame, seized, envies, entered, shoved, admires, lied, devalues, threw, breaks, blurted out, got drunk, ate, mocks, fantasized, destroys, protects, evaluates, chattered, instructed, gave a present, stacked, appropriated, came, brought, arrived, drew, hides, gossiped, pushed, told, said, laughs, poked, hides, appreciates,

Source. Authors's work.

The next marker of hostility is the way the client refers to the partners when describing their problem and the behavior of all other parties to the conflict: using first names, surnames, status, nicknames, avoiding proper names altogether, etc. This will help identify the extent to which the client identifies with other people. If the client uses a possessive pronoun ("my daughter," "my husband," "my mother" (about her mother-in-law), my colleagues, etc.) or resorts to affectionate, abbreviated, "pet" names, friendly nicknames, then you can assume that there is no hostility towards these people. If, on the other hand, the client uses insulting, degrading labels or nicknames ("it", "bastard", "snake", "hyena", "cunning fox", etc.), then we can definitely speak of a hostile attitude toward these individuals.

It is advisable to use the form to better record the information (Table 4).

Table 4.
Client survey form for naming the partner

How the client names the other parties		
Positive	neutral	negative
Total	Total	Total

Source. Authors' work.

Another marker of a hostile attitude is unproductive, meaningless generalizations: attempts to justify one's own aggressiveness leads to a desire to seek justification for one's actions, words, and feelings, and to use rationalization as a way of psychological defense. Thus, treating the other as an enemy creates an attitude: "the enemy is bad by default, *always* and *in general*, *nothing good* should ever be expected of him/her." By counting the number of generalizations used by the client in describing the situation and the persons involved in it, one can conclude that the client has a hostile attitude towards other parties to the conflict.

Table 5
Client survey form for generalizations

Generalizations	Quantity in a narrative (story)
Always	
Never	
Nothing	
Regularly	
Everything	
In general	
None	
Not a single time	
At least sometimes...	

Generalizations	Quantity in a narrative (story)
At least once....	
Write other expressions	
Total generalizations used by the client	

Source. Authors' work.

When describing others, people often resort to figurative comparisons, metaphors that reveal their attitude towards those they are talking about: a person can be compared to a spruce tree, a sun, a bird, a computer, etc., or to a snake, a jackal, a fox, a shark, a robot, an axe, or something else more unpleasant, scary, repulsive. These comparisons should also be considered, positive and negative ones should be counted. When the client treats the other as an enemy, there will be more negative comparisons in his or her story about others (sometimes there are no positive ones at all).

To determine whether a client feels hostility, it is also important to carefully observe the client's facial expressions, looks, intonations, and gestures. Enemies are usually looked at from under one's brows, keeping in view an imaginary triangle of the interlocutor's face, with the eyes and the middle of the forehead being the vertices (when one looks like this, the pupils are narrowed). The facial muscles are tense, there is a frowned look, the lips make a clear line or the corners of the lips are lowered. Voice intonation is raised, held almost on the same note, or lowered and monotonous. The speech is mostly fast, but often interrupted by pauses. The gestures become sharp, hands and quite high and move actively, or the client clenches his/her fists tightly, holds one hand with the other, the whole posture is tense, muscles are tense as well. Look, facial expressions, intonations, and gestures can occur not only in the direct presence of the "enemy" but only at the mention of him/her. These "symptoms" indicate powerful negative experiences of the client. For the counselor, this is a signal: "Beware: hostility!".

Thus, there are the following markers of hostility: talking not about the essence of the problem, but accusing other parties or complaining; negative assessment of the partner's personality (more description of the negative personality traits and character traits of the partner, less description of his or her actions); use of derogatory "names"; unproductive generalizations; aggressive intonations; hostile look; hostile gestures.

Findings

Generally, hostility is a mutual feeling: it is difficult to be favorable or even neutral towards someone who is hostile to you. Therefore, in a situation of destructive interpersonal conflict, all parties usually feel like enemies. But even if at least one party to the conflict is hostile, there is no hope that the parties will be able to constructively resolve the problem; first, the attitude of the actors in the situation must be changed from hostile to partner one (Hrabovska, 2020).

Let us try to model a programme of actions that can help overcome a client's hostility toward another person or persons. Depending on whether their behavior is within cultural norms and the degree of their hostility, one can do joint work with mutually hostile clients in one room or there can be separate meetings in different rooms. Each format has its advantages and disadvantages. Working with mutually hostile clients in the same room requires more tension and diplomacy from the counselor, every mistake here not only sets you one step back, but can turn into a real disaster, but the process is faster as the clients hear and see each other and if they see that the other party reduces its hostility, breaks the shell of suspicion and distrust, demonstrates sincere friendship, it is easier to meet them halfway. When working separately with each client in a separate room, the counselor first needs to gain the full trust of all clients so that they believe all the information about the actions and words of others, former enemies.

When working with clients on overcoming their hostility towards their partner, the following should be kept in mind: the clients should work only with the counselor (but it is good to hear and see what the partner is doing and how they are doing when the reconciliation counselor is working with them). The counselor should work with each client in turn, for approximately the same amount of time. Clients should be given the same type of tasks and questions.

Here are examples of a conciliator's actions that help change the attitude from hostile to partner relations. The decentring technique works well. At the first stage, the client writes down a list of shortcomings, personal traits, and actions that annoy him or her in a partner. One can move on to the second stage when the client is of the opinion that the list is exhausted. Then he or she should write down his or her own reaction to each of the partner's shortcomings. At the third stage, when the second list is complete, the counsellor should cut off the "shortcomings" column and ask the client to analyse the "reactions" column, imagining that someone treats, acts, and reacts to him or her in this way. You should ask the client the following questions: "Would you like this behavior?"; 'Would it be nice to be treated this way?'; "Would you like to communicate with this person, solve important things, do important things?" This technique can help the clients make an attempt to decenter, evaluate their actions and reactions from the partner's perspective, understand that not only the partner is to blame for their conflict, and determine the share of their own responsibility for the situation.

The next technique that can help reduce the hostility of the client is the word selection technique. The client receives a task: using positive words (adjectives, verbs) he/she should describe all the other participants in the conflict situation. It is important to explain to the client that it is necessary to describe the actions of the partner (partners), and not to give an assessment of personality traits. One may suggest doing this task in a written form. A modification of this technique may be a similar task with a request to describe the actions of the partner using certain sets of adjectives and verbs. The word sets should consist of positive and neutral evaluative adjectives and verbs. For example, a set of adjectives: "generous, avid, compliant, optimistic,

careful, sociable, mobile, fast, talker, frugal, severe, calm, fearless, shy, silent, secretive, romantic, flexible, prudent, persistent, neat, freedom-loving, obedient, self-confident, rebel, purposeful, kind, a person with firm beliefs, overweight, thin, gentle, cheerful, smart, decent, polite, simple, gullible, dreamy, creative, inventive, conscientious"; a set of verbs: "took, brought, drafted, entrusted, gave, put, said, helped, supported, taught, paid attention", etc. Sets of words should be selected for customers according to the specific scenario of the situation. If it is difficult for the client to start creating a story, one can suggest first highlight with a marker (preferably green or blue) the words that, according to the client, can characterize the partner (partners). And then use these definitions and verbs in the description of the situation and partners. When the descriptions are done, the conciliator should review them himself/herself to make sure that the texts are written according to the conditions. After that the partners can read these texts (which should be significantly different from the offensive words that clients exchanged earlier), or one may invite clients to read them out loud so that everyone hears a normal non-offensive story from the other.

The following exercises should continue the intervention, reducing client's suspicion and hostility. Good results are usually obtained by having a maieutic conversation according to the scenario described below (Socrates' technique). First, the clients should be reminded of the well-known, but, unfortunately, not very popular principles of communication, which are called "The Three Sieves of Socrates: Truth, Goodness, Usefulness". Truth is understood as the communicator's confidence in the truthfulness of what he/she is going to say. Goodness lies in knowing whether the message will be positive and friendly. Usefulness is manifested in the communicator's confidence that the message will be relevant for the interlocutor. It is important to ask clients whether they would like the people they communicate with to sift their words through such sieves, and whether they should use these sieves themselves.

Next you should encourage the client to remember and make a list of people with whom he/she can have shared positive memories. It is also advisable to recall positive memories shared with a partner. The next step is to name (write) a list of people who can praise the partner for something. It is important to reflect on what this praise is about, what is something that each of these individuals can praise the partner. After that, the client is asked to outline what he/she can personally praise the partner for. In the future, it is proposed to praise the partner out loud.

Formation of trust between clients and the emergence of a sense of attractiveness can be facilitated by the disclosure of common value orientations, common goals, needs and interests. It is important to encourage clients to disclose their values, needs and interests, to emphasise the coincidence of their motivational vectors, to emphasise the similarity of their personality traits. It is useful to offer clients a list of common values (one can use the list of terminal values, according to M. Rokeach: health, happy family, confidence, love, material well-being, wisdom, development, productive life, freedom, cognition, happiness of others, interesting job, creativity, activity, recognition,

friends, beauty of nature and art, entertainment), ask everyone to choose 5-10 most important things. There is a high probability that clients will choose similar values, at least 4-5 values out of 10 will coincide. This will give the mediator an important basis for the talk with clients who will hear their opinions from another person, make sure that in general they are looking in the same direction, their confrontation is groundless. In a similar way one can work with personality traits: to offer the clients a certain set of personality traits where positive and negative traits are presented (for example, determination, honesty, decency, avarice, insidiousness, kindness, meanness, generosity, self-sacrifice, desire to care, etc.), and ask them to choose the ones they like. Comparing these lists will also help change clients' views of their partners, help reduce their mutual hostility and suspicion.

Work with the metaphor creation technique sometimes also gives good results: one can suggest that the clients imagine a partner in the form of a pleasant smell, a favourite taste, a flower, a toy, a colour, a melody, etc. One should keep in mind that it is necessary to emphasise that this image should be pleasant, comfortable and cozy. It means it is worth taking maximum efforts to reduce fear, anxiety, and suspicion of clients.

It is clear that all the clients must work according to the given scenario at the same time and alternately fulfil the request of the mediator.

While working on changing client's attitude towards partners, it is also worth paying attention to the way they treat the problem (attitude to the problem technique): do they consider it their own, or are they trying to shift the responsibility for problem resolution onto others (partners, mediator, circumstances, etc.). In this context, there are helpful questions: "Whose problem is this?"; "Who called this a problem?"; "Who wins and who loses if the problem is resolved (or not resolved at all)"; "Can you resolve the problem on your own, without the help of the other party?". It is important to convince the clients that it is only cooperation with other participants in the process that will provide a constructive solution to the problem.

If the counsellor notices excessive tension in clients, then it is necessary to do short relaxation exercises. One can offer the clients to do a point self-massage (one should press the point between the eyebrows with the index finger for one minute; the points on the hands under the palm where the pulse is felt should be pressed for twenty seconds on each hand; the point located three fingers below the palm in the middle of the hand should be pressed for twenty seconds on each hand).

Alternating tension and relaxation of the muscles of the arms and legs has a soothing effect. The exercise is performed while sitting, keeping your hands on the table or armrests of the chair, with your feet on the floor. It is necessary to simultaneously strain the muscles of the arms and legs, and quickly relax them after straining. One should conduct 3-5 rounds of the exercise, each time extending the duration of the straining (3 sec, 5 sec, 7 sec, 10 sec, 15 sec). Breathing exercises usually have a calming effect.

If the mediator decided to work with clients in separate rooms (work in the mode of separate meetings), then the work can be carried out according to the aforementioned

scenario, except for the fact that everything should happen so that the client does not hear the words and does not see the actions of the partner. So after the exercises, the positive results (memories, gratitude, praise, compliments, etc.) should be transferred by the mediator to the other party. Since clients are nervous and tense, often very aggressive, it is worth starting with relaxation exercises. To reassure the client, one can try to do breathing exercises together with the client, slowly making breathing slower and calmer. After that, one can move on to breathing exercises and other relaxation exercises. When the emotional state of the client is normalized, one can start work, which will help change the client's attitude towards other parties and the problem itself.

When the mode of separate meetings is used, the mediator must adhere to the following rules: the premises where the clients stay should be the same in terms of comfort; the duration of the conversation with each party is approximately the same (from 10 to 20 minutes); paraphrase of the content of the message of the parties should be as close to the original as possible, but without insults, degrading characteristics, evaluations; one needs to tell the clients the most important things; the parties should be told something that can unite them; there is no need to give any evaluations or comments; it is forbidden to give advice; try to change the attitude towards the other party, convince the parties that they will not be able to resolve the problem without the help of the other party. It is clear that these exercises do not exhaust the possible interventions and influence of the mediator on clients. The conciliator should accumulate successful actions, questions, techniques that will help overcome the negative hostile attitudes of the client regarding the other parties, or at least shake these beliefs a little, alleviate parties' fear of each other, see others as partners in problem resolution.

Discussion

Generally people who are hostile to others consider the situation they find themselves in to be a *conflict (clash),* rather than *a problem (something that needs to be resolved and will give a useful result)*. Therefore, an important point in reducing hostility is a change in the person's attitude to the situations, seeing it not as a *conflict*, but as a *problem*. This difference is significant, because when a person evaluates a certain situation as a conflict, it evokes negative, often asthenic experiences, destructive motives and behaviour: in a conflict one needs to fight, destroy the enemy. When it comes to a problem, people use cognitive processes; work on solving what is outlined as a problem, look for allies, advisors, etc. Buss & Perry noted that after anger has cooled, the hostility might be "a cognitive residual of ill will, resentment and perhaps suspicion of others' motives" (Buss & Perry, 1992, p. 457).

Sometimes the establishment of constructive partner relationship between the parties to the conflict is sufficient for them to find a solution to their problem themselves. On the other hand, establishment of relations between the parties to the conflict

and changing the attitude towards the other, from hostile to partner one is facilitated when the clients come to realise that what is happening between them is not a conflict, but a problem that can be resolve only in the process of cooperation: to be allies "on the same side of the barricade", and to consider the problem as a common one. This will help clients switch from negative emotions to mental activity, work constructively on finding mutually beneficial and mutually acceptable solutions to the problem.

A meta-analysis by Erica Birkley & Christopher Eckhardt highlights the relationship between hostility, internal negative emotions, and violence in partner relationships, highlighting the importance of emotional control in violence prevention (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015). Here the following metaphor may be appropriate: if several people get lost in the same maze, they must unite to find the right path to get out of it. If they quarrel, blame each other, resort to fighting, try to destroy each other or just sit down and cry, they are likely to spend lots of unpleasant time in this maze.

Conclusion

The article highlights the problem of overcoming hostile attitudes between the conflicting parties through the use of psychological techniques and approaches. It is emphasized that successful resolution of destructive conflicts is possible only if the attitude of the parties changes from hostile into partner one. The authors suggest different formats of mediator's work (joint or separate), each having its own advantages and challenges.

A number of practical techniques helping to change attitudes: decentering, selecting positive characteristics of the partner, creating metaphors, etc. are described. The importance of building trust, finding common values and interests, and using relaxation exercises to relieve tension is emphasized.

The authors consider the peculiarities of working in separate meetings, which include the transfer of positive information between the parties through an intermediary. The mediator should be neutral, avoid evaluations and advice, focus on creating conditions for constructive dialogue. At the same time it is important to ensure an individual approach and the accumulation of effective techniques to reduce hostility and transform hostile relations into partnerships.

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