**Bridging Divides: How I Overcame Conflict Through Communication**

**By Elisha Carmen Erick**

As a teenager entering adulthood, I can say that facing conflicts is a part of my everyday life. No matter in what aspect it may be: relationship, family problems, or even with friends. Conflict will always exist as long as we are still breathing. It’s like suffering from a cancer disease, it’ll keep hurting if we don’t do anything about it but if we choose to live and better ourselves then we might gradually become immune to the pain.

It’s tiring to face conflicts every single day as a first born with a lot of responsibilities, it’s agitating for a person with terrible communication skills to be confronted with predicaments and feuds continuously and as a person that constantly needs the media reassurance in order to feel belonged, it sucks the life out of me. I remember back then when I pressured myself to become the best so that I could make my parents proud. I thought flaunting my achievements to them would make them feel better over the financial burden that they have been dealing with. I was wrong because my actions only made it worse since I failed to properly express my expectations, wants and needs to them. Consequently, they blamed themselves for not being able to provide the best for me. It was not my intention to make them feel that way but I felt guilty that they took it the wrong way.

At school, there were few times when I ran into misunderstandings with my classmates. One of the possible root causes of the problem was because of personal feelings. I had the feeling that they were harboring grudge on me though I could not put my fingers on the reasons that they had such sentiment on me but it started to irk me when they began excluding me from group work. Wasn’t that a bit too much ? I had thought of confronting them but I was afraid that it would only add salt to the wounds. I preferred to just keep quiet most of the time and hope the heated tension would cool down over time.

Another time was when I was in a relationship with a boy who had difficulties conveying his feelings. He did not really know how to say what he felt when I was venting to him about my worries and insecurities. Even though I knew what he felt, it was hard for me to understand what he meant most of the time. I felt mentally drained when he kept asking the same questions every day. It was always “How are you?” , “What are you doing?” or “Have you eaten yet ?” . One day, when I was having mood swings, I snapped and just told him how I honestly felt and broke up with him there and then. I suddenly realized that practically all of my past relationships went downhill because I could not resolve our issues with an open and honest communication that we just swept our discontentment under the rug.

The cycle of conflict will always continue unless we break it. Thankfully, I have come to a realization of my mistakes and I am aiming to better myself. I had started to open up more to my family by thoroughly explaining my situation in the hope of gaining their understanding better and to make it clear that I did not expect them to do anything more than what they have already given to me. I made a promise that I would also take risks to interact first with my friends as a way to learn how to communicate better even though I am still pretty scared of how they might perceive me but I have learned to just let things be. The important thing is that I should try my best to reconcile with them. As for romantic relationships, I think I need to take a break from these and focus on myself first. Remember, life isn’t always about finding a partner to live the rest of your life with since life is obviously much bigger than that. Sometimes you just wish to live a peaceful life while sipping a hot chocolate drink in your big apartment.

I occasionally ask myself; how can I help other people who are struggling just like me? “That’s how I came up with the idea to write a book about life conflicts and even publish it! “It is what I would've said but for now I'd just lend an ear and give out advice to people who go through conflicts. Another thing I would do is by creating an account on social media like Instagram and TikTok and create content that can encourage people to proactively reflect on their life conflicts and take actions accordingly. One important lesson to bear in mind when dealing with any type of conflict is the importance of listening to, understanding and respecting others while being able to express ourselves comfortably. Remember, a rising tide lifts all boats.