

LSBA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section School Outreach Program for National Mediation Week

Welcome:

My name is Paul Breaux, otherwise know as Samuel's dad, and this is Mathew Morris and Breanna Green, 2 of my students from the Civil Mediation Clinic at LSU Law School. We are here in celebration of National Mediation Week. I am a mediator – who knows what that is?

A mediator is someone who tries to help others who are arguing or fighting resolve their problem without taking sides.

Why would it be important to be a mediator?

God calls us to do all we can to “live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18), and to obey the 2nd Commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). Remember that in the Bible God is frequently referred to as “the God of peace” (Rom. 15:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20) and Jesus is called “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). In fact, Jesus is the supreme peacemaker because he sacrificed his life so that we could experience peace with God and with each other. {from The Peacemaker – Ken Sande}

So, what we are going to do today is to talk to you about a couple of things you can do to help others who may be arguing, or even to help you if you are having trouble with someone else (a brother/sister, a friend, or even a parent). Now my original plan was to stand up here and lecture to you for the next 50 minutes about what I've learned over the last 20 years in helping people solve their problems, but my students said, “BORING”. So instead, we've come up with some exercises and games to play – sound better? Think of class today as a kind of harkness – it will be much more interesting if you participate. So here we go . . .

First Exercise: Point of View (10 Minutes)

Before we get started, I want you all to take a look at a picture. I am going to hand it out, but keep it face down on your desk until I say to turn it over.

OLD LADY/YOUNG LADY PICTURE

Delivery

1. Take a couple of minutes, but do not comment on the picture.
2. Someone tell about one thing in the picture.
3. How many have seen what the first person has seen?
4. Does anyone sees anything different?
5. How many see what that person has seen?
6. “I'm confused. How can some people see different things?”
7. Explain the two pictures in one.

8. "What does this mean for people who are in a conflict and are trying to work out a solution?"

9. Explain, "Two people can see the same thing happen but each one sees it differently and they both may be 'right'."

Questions for discussion

- How did you feel when another person saw something different from what you saw in the picture?
- Is it possible that two people could see different things in the picture, and they might both be "right?"
- Why do you think we shared the picture with you?
- Why would it be important for you when you want to solve a problem to remember the *Old Lady/Young Lady* picture?
- ***To the facilitator: You may wish to prepare a few examples of this or ask the group if they have any recent experiences that they would like to share.***

Second Exercise: Listening – Space Invaders

So we just saw how two people can look at a situation and see completely different things. This is how a lot of conflicts start. As a mediator, I work especially hard to make sure that each side understands the other. What do you think is the best way to do this? I have to be a really good listener – and it's not always as easy as it sounds. Let's play a game: I need 3 volunteers who think that they are excellent listeners.

Space Invader *Guide for Facilitators*

Then, when the process is complete, you can make the statement, "Even the most excellent listeners cannot remember everything." The importance of this exercise is to let the group know that when you want to solve a problem with another person, you need to listen very carefully so that you can understand their point of view, and you can work out a fair agreement.

Delivery

1. Ask for three volunteers who consider themselves to be excellent listeners.
2. Pick the three volunteers. Choose which persons will be #1, #2 and #3.
3. Explain to the volunteers and the group: "I am going to read a message to #1. #1 will listen carefully and try to remember as much as possible, because when I am finished, #1 will tell the same message to #2, from memory. Then, #2 will tell #3 the message, and #3 will tell the message to the group."
Tell the group not to talk or give hints to the three volunteers.
4. Ask #2 and #3 to leave the room (have an adult escort them out and stay with them until you call for them) or move to an area of the room where they will not hear the message being given to #1.
5. Read the Space Invader message to #1.

SPACE INVADER *The Message*

We have a serious problem at our school. The other day I was sitting in a classroom, and this little green man came crashing through the ceiling. He said he was from another planet. He had purple hair, green skin, four red eyes, three arms and six legs. He had an enormous head and was probably very smart. He said many other green people from his planet would be coming to our school soon. They would not harm us, but they might want to teach us their language called "Greenspeak." I was so excited by the appearance of this weird little man that I rushed up to him and gave him a big hug. My actions must have embarrassed him because he blushed turning quite purple.

6. When you finish reading the message, call #2 into the room.
7. Ask #1 to tell the message to #2. When #1 is finished telling the message, call in #3 and ask #2 to tell #3 the message.
8. When #3 has received the message, ask #3 to tell the group the message.
9. Thank all the volunteers.
10. Read the entire message for everyone again.

Questions for discussion

1. What happened here?
2. What made it hard to remember?
3. What could you have done to help you remember more? (Take notes and use restating.)
4. What did we learn in this exercise that would be important to you as a problem solver?

Teaching Points

- Even the best listeners don't always remember everything that was said.
- We should never take listening for granted. It is important to be sure we understand the details of what we hear and that we obtain correct information.

Third Activity: Active Listening (10 minutes)

To demonstrate good listening skills and explain why listening is important for problem solvers.

Flipchart or whiteboard and marking pens

Delivery

1. Ask for a volunteer (even the teacher would work for this one) to come to the front and tell you about a movie or a TV show. While the student is speaking, demonstrate BAD listening by exhibiting the following behaviors:

- Make no eye contact, show no interest, yawn, interrupt
- Pretend to text someone while saying, “uh, huh”, etc.
- Talk about a movie or a show you saw
- Ask several “yes-no” questions (e.g. Did you like the movie? Was the star good? Did you eat popcorn?)

2. Ask the group what they observed you doing.

3. Have the volunteer tell you about the movie or TV show again. This time, demonstrate good listening by:

- making eye contact• nodding, looking interested• restating (paraphrasing the student's comments)
- asking open-ended questions (Questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” answers. For example, “What did you like best about the movie?” **Use the reporters question: who, what, when, where & how, plus use: “tell me more about...”**)

4. Ask the group what you did this time. Write answers on the board.

5. Ask “Why are open-ended questions important?” If the group doesn't know, explain that you get more information.

6. Discuss the value of restating for the speaker and for the listener.

7. A good alternative question to ask is:

“When you really want someone to understand you, what do you do?” This is a good question to ask in response to kids who mumble or speak very softly.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does this mean for you as a problem solver?
2. How can you show you are listening?
3. When is it difficult to listen?
4. How do you feel when a person does/does not listen?
5. Why would listening be important for a problem solver?

Teaching Points:

Teaching Points:

- We should never take listening for granted. It is important to be sure we understand the details of what we hear and that we obtain correct information.
- Understanding people and problem solving depends on “active listening”.
- Active listening
 - consists of eye contact, nodding, not interrupting, asking relevant/open ended questions, and restating.
 - validates the speaker and encourages open communication.
 - creates an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable speaking. It builds trust.
 - helps encourage the speaker to be more open and to more fully discuss a topic.
 - helps build a positive relationship between people who need to work together.
- Good listening is one of the tools used by effective problem-solvers.
- Open-ended questions improve communication because you get more information.

4th Activity: The Planet Game – 15 Minutes

The Planet Game

Delivery:

1. I am going to split you up into 3 groups, each representing a different planet. You will pretend to be groups of people from these planets.
2. Then divide them into two or three groups (see planet worksheets in *Words Work Supplement*).
3. Each group will be given three questions about their planet:
 - a. a. What is the name of your planet?
 - b. b. What do people do for fun on your planet?
 - c. c. What do people eat on your planet?
 - d. Each planet must answer these questions.
4. Each group will be told how people behave on their planet. **It is vital to the effectiveness of this activity that people understand that whatever happens, they should behave the way people from their planet behave.**

(see Planets A, B, C)

Give each group a copy of the directions for their planet. Tell one person in each group to read the description of how the people on their planet behave. Tell the groups to take two minutes to answer the three questions on the sheet.

3. After they have answered all three questions, they should start behaving the way the people in their group behave.

Tell the groups that their goal is to find out the answers to the three questions from the members of the other planet(s).

4. The facilitator(s) will take two people from each group and send them to another group to experience being in a different culture. Do at least two rounds of visiting. If the groups are large, you can send more visitors at one time, but you need to have at least four to six people “at home” if possible.

5. After the visiting is done, have the groups sit down, and keep the planet groups together. Ask each group to describe the people from the other planet(s).

Make a column for each planet. Write the descriptions under the appropriate planet

- 6. Ask each planet to say which things on their planet’s list are ‘facts’ and which things are ‘judgments’. Mark all the things which are judgments and all those which are facts.

7. Consider adding **rules about touching** if you feel this could be an issue for the group. Do not do this exercise with over 25 participants; divide the group and seek additional facilitators to prevent this exercise from becoming unmanageable quickly.

SEE PLANET DESCRIPTIONS/QUESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE

Planet A

The beings from your planet like to stay close to one another. They only talk to a person if they are touching that person. If asked a question, they reach out to touch the questioner before responding. They initiate conversation by touching the person they want to talk to. They speak very softly.

1. What is the name of your planet?
2. What do people like to do for fun on your planet?
3. What do your people eat?

Planet B

The beings from your planet feel most comfortable talking across a long distance. Anyone closer than two arm-lengths is in your personal space. All conversations are carried on in loud tones so that you can be heard.

1. What is the name of your planet?
2. What do people like to do for fun on your planet?
3. What do your people eat?

Planet C

The beings from your planet may talk only with members of the opposite sex. If they want to say something to someone of the same sex, they must get someone from the opposite sex to relay their message. In the same way, they can listen only to someone of the opposite sex. If someone of the same sex tries to speak to them, they turn away, and ask someone of the opposite sex to relay the message.

1. What is the name of your planet?
2. What do people like to do for fun on your planet?
3. What do your people eat?

Session Objective: To identify how stereotypes and judgments about others hinder us from communicating effectively with each other and to distinguish judgment from facts

Guide for Facilitators

This is an innovative way to experience what challenges we all face when communicating and problem solving with people from different cultures.

Teaching Points

- When people are different from each other, there may be obstacles to communication that you might not realize.
- When we become aware of how our own culture shapes our expectations, we can begin to be more accepting of others who are different. As long as we think that the way we do things is the “right” way, it is hard to accept others who are different from ourselves.
- When we encounter people who are different from us, some people make judgments (positive and negative) which may interfere with communication.
- If people from other cultures do things differently from us, it doesn’t mean they are weird or strange. It simply means that their culture is different from ours and that people behave differently.

Matthew’s Story: Afganistan

* Ask if they have stories of other cultures

Closing:

So the things we talked about today (trying to understand the point of view of all sides, exercising active listening, and being aware of cultural differences) are the foundation for resolving any dispute, and may keep you out of an argument to begin with. Try this out with your family and friends, and you’ll be amazed at how well they work.

And remember Jesus’ words in his Sermon on Mount: “Blessed be the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons (and daughters) God!”

What questions or thoughts do you have about what we’ve done today?