

**LSBA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section  
School Outreach Program for National Mediation Week  
(Alternative Lesson which may be more suitable to Elementary Grades\*)**

**Welcome:**

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am 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.*

*What I am 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).*

**Lesson:**

What does it mean to have a conflict or a disagreement? It means that two or more people do not agree. Have you had a conflict? Allow students to give some examples.

How do you think you can handle conflicts peacefully and without violence? How do you work out problems with each other without asking an adult for help?

Sometimes conflicts are hard to work out. There might not be an easy answer and you might need someone else to help solve the problem.

Some ways of resolving conflicts peacefully are:

**Negotiation** – Two interested people figuring out a problem together.

**Mediation** - Neutral third person (called a mediator) leads the conversation and sets the ground rules. The mediator helps find a compromise or common ground that they can agree on.

*Why is it important for someone to ask for help?* Some reasons may be that the problem could get worse, the people may become angry, a physical fight may occur or the problem will not be handled. Mediators do not judge or get people in trouble.

*Do you know that attorneys often settle things without going to court?* Sometimes they use mediation. Have you ever helped two people to handle a problem or argument? You may have been the mediator to help your friends solve a problem peacefully/.

*Have you ever had problems on the playground? How did you solve it?* Listen to several responses.

**Tell the following story:** Two children were playing catch on the playground at recess. Pretty soon another child came along and asked to play. The two children said, “No! We don’t want to play with you.” The child who was left out cried and cried.

*Could this situation happen on your playground? How did the children feel? Was this a good thing to happen?*

We are now going to see if mediation would help. Ask for or choose 3 volunteers to act out the scene. When the two children reject the third child, step in as the mediator and coach the children through the mediation process.

### **Steps in the Mediation Process**

- **Introductions:** “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. What are your names? It seems like you have a problem here. Would you like me to help? (The goal here is to put the parties at ease. The mediator does not make the decisions; the mediator only facilitates helping the parties come to their own agreement)
- **Telling the Story:** Ask each side to tell his or her side of the story without interruptions from the other side. The mediator does not take sides, but listens as each person speaks.
- **Brainstorming Solutions:** Ask students for ideas about how to solve the conflict. Suggested questions are: “What would have to happen for you to feel better about this? How could we solve this problem? Elicit ideas from the whole class at this time, not just the students who acted out the scene.
- **Reach an Agreement:** Help the parties find a solution they can all live with or a compromise to resolve the dispute.

If time permits, invite other student volunteers to role play the steps in the mediation process. Keep coaching. Ask the other children to help you coach each group through the process.

If time permits, make up a routine to help students recall each step.

*For example:*

Introductions – pretend to shake hands

Telling the Story – make talking noises with your hands

Brainstorm Solutions – touch your head

Reach an Agreement – Give a ‘high five’ sign

Review the steps in the mediation process by asking the children to tell you what those steps are.

If there is time tell another story or ask the teacher to tell a story that highlights a common class conflict. For example:

The children were all lined up to go to the library. Suddenly, one child at the back of the line charged up and got in front. The other children didn’t like that at all so they pushed the child out of the way. They pushed so hard the child fell down and got hurt.

Ask four or five children to role play the scene, have another student act as mediator. Coach the children through the process. Solicit advice from the rest of the class using this as a review of the steps.

Remind the children to use peaceful non violent ways to resolve conflicts, just as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did. Thank the students and teacher for their time and tell them you look forward to seeing them again next month.

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\*This exercise was obtained and adapted from the Baton Rouge Bar Association’s Junior Partners Academy MLK Lesson, which was used in third grade classrooms. For more information about the exercise or program, please contact BRBA.