

Mediation and Juicing - Parallel Worlds?

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John Sturrock (Core Solutions Group)

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One of the positive aspects of the enforced changes brought about by lockdown is that it enables - or compels - us to try new things.

So far, I've learned how to create and have issued 13 podcasts, the idea being to spread ideas as widely as possible at this crucial time. After much procrastination, I've published a book of articles and blog posts (some on Kluwer), entitled A Mediator's Musings, with proceeds going to cancer research (available on [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) and [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in both paperback and Kindle formats).

I've been privileged to act as host of some (free) major "conversation" events online with global audiences (the latest is on [Wednesday 8 July](#)) - and, where appropriate, I have offered my mediation services and training using Zoom, about which I wrote in my previous [Kluwer post](#).

What a time this is. A time of innovation, surprises, deep reflection and some profound challenges.

For me, there was another surprising novelty which only arose because of the strange times in which we live. It created an unexpected juxtaposition of ideas as we reflect on attitudes towards mediation. Bear with me while this unfolds.

My wife and I felt we needed a break of some sort. We could not travel. However, for some time I have been following an interesting enterprise offering "juicing" detox retreats. Yes, juicing. [The Body Tool Kit](#) is a project run by Katrina Mather, attracting people from all over Europe and elsewhere to scenic, isolated spots in Scotland for a week of rest and recuperation, being nourished only on fruit and vegetable juice (and some soup in the evening). Reflecting the spirit of the age, Katrina has now taken these retreats online.

For six days, we met on Zoom four times a day with our fifteen fellow juicers, each consuming our pint of remarkable concoctions, all mixed at home (our garage was full of fruit and veg!). We learned not only about the restorative benefits of juicing (and giving your digestive system a real break) but about the impact of Big Pharma and Big Food on our diet and medication - just watch Jason Vale's [Super Juice Me](#) and Joe Cross's [Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead](#) for inspiration.

We learned about toxicity, stress, inflammation, the gut/brain connection, the adverse impacts of antibiotics, earthing, magnesium, hydrotherapy, 16-18 hour fasting and so on. All delivered warmly, knowledgeably and without hyperbole. Fascinating. Incidentally, I lost nearly half a stone and my excess midriff. I've been more or less off caffeine since. But all that is incidental to the learning and longer-term healing benefits. Juicing permits the body to heal itself. It recognises, or mediates, the relationship between the body and diet. It detoxifies.

With the hint at the end of that last paragraph, what has this got to do with mediation I hear you ask? Well, it was midway through the week when the penny dropped. I'd done a bit of research online and, to be honest, was rather sceptical when I read the scientific studies and discovered the apparent absence of evidence based and fully researched support for the benefits of juicing. In fact, on day one, I almost contemplated quitting when I had finished my Google searching.

But then someone (the GP in our group, I think) mentioned that doctors receive very little training at medical school in nutrition and its benefits and can tend simply to prescribe medication for our ailments, which often deals with symptoms rather than underlying causes. This can become a habit, the way things are done. Sometimes the economic models for medical services are dependent on pharmaceutical companies and their funding. Juicing is viewed as AMT: "Alternative Medical Treatment". Very much an afterthought and rather dismissed. And yet the anecdotal evidence of its value is significant. For many people with a medical problem, it may offer a real long-term remedy. It could be argued, in many cases, that conventional medicine (and medication) should perhaps be the last resort, the final "alternative". For it can be toxic to the body.

The parallel with mediation soon became striking. Training in negotiation and mediation is rather limited in most law and business schools. It can seem cursory, a bit of an afterthought. Resistance among practitioners and policy-makers is regularly attributed to lack of an evidence base for success, although all those of us with experience know, anecdotally, of mediation's benefits in most (all?) cases. It offers real long-term remedies in many situations. Mediation can help parties to heal themselves. It mediates the relationship between people and their problems in difficult situations. It detoxifies.

However, the legal system can appear set up to prescribe litigation as a regular antidote to disputes - or at least to tend to favour adversarial, polarising negotiation strategies. Often only the symptoms are being addressed, rather than the underlying causes. This can become a habit, the way things are done. Sometimes there is an economic interest in doing so. We know that mediation, as "Alternative Dispute Resolution", is often not the first choice, can even be an afterthought and rather dismissed. Yet, in many cases, it could be much more sensible to view litigation (or antagonistic negotiation) as the true last resort, the final "alternative". For litigation can be toxic to parties' commercial, professional and personal relationships.

An important caveat: many doctors and many lawyers subscribe to and offer holistic advice. And of course there are times when conventional medication is essential, a life saver, just as on occasion a robust approach is needed in disputes. As ever, it is a question of considering where the balance lies.

Mediation and juicing: parallel worlds, parallel experiences, much to contemplate. It is only by experimenting with new things, innovating and being prepared to be imaginative, that progress can be made. In this new era, we will need innovation and imagination, and to try new things, even if that means for some of us accepting the lot of the pioneer, as a prophet without honour in her or his own land.