

Kluwer Mediation Blog

Beyond the ADR bookshelf: in search of professional inspiration outside the field

Diane Levin (Diane Levin LLC) · Sunday, October 28th, 2012

On the final day of an advanced mediation skills training I took many years ago, the trainers brought in a group of improvisational actors. The idea, as you might readily guess, was to invite us to shake off our habitual responses (together with our post-lunch lethargy) and, unbound by convention, let our creative impulses off leash to respond spontaneously to the unexpected. (I direct you to the musings of Jeffrey Kravis, a highly respected mediator and esteemed contributor to [this site](#), who has masterfully explored the interplay of improvisation and mediation.)



I remember happily the challenge that this afternoon exercise offered us – not to mention the fun and joy of play. Since then, to reinvigorate or reboot my practice I’ve continued to seek out professional inspiration in unlikely places. Looking beyond the familiar terrain of the mediation landscape brings the change of scenery I need or reinforces the values mediation embraces. The following are some recent sources of musing and amusement to share with you.

Listening more closely....

Those of you of a certain age (you know who you are) may remember [Bernie Krause](#) from his rock-and-roll years with music legends like The Doors. He took his passion for sounds to the world’s greatest venue: [the soundscape of natural environments](#). It’s astonishing how much sound our natural landscapes contain when the din of human enterprise falls silent. According to Krause, if you listen carefully, [you can even hear trees sing](#).

A kindred spirit is acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton. Visit his web site, “[One Square Inch of Silence](#)”, an homage to “the quietest place in the United States”, located in the Hoh Rain Forest at Olympic National Park. “One Square Inch” offers an open invitation to [listen in a deeper and more conscious way](#). Currently on the site is [a mesmerizing recording of forest rain](#). (You’ll be tempted to open an umbrella.)

Recognizing possibilities...

Mediators and negotiators are familiar with the concept of the fixed pie versus the expanding one. In old-school negotiation, a single pie waits to be divided, and everyone seeks the largest piece. In principled negotiation, mediators like talk of expanding the pie — of creating value so that everyone's needs are satisfied. Even in hard economic times, when pies and resources are all too often limited, mediators can still inspire clients to work creatively —heroically — within the constraints they face. To feel inspired yourself, [check out what people who reside in unimaginably small spaces have done to expand their own possibilities for living.](#)

Taking a second look...

On a recent visit to my old hometown, I paid a visit to one of the many independent bookstores that flourish in that area. I came across a wonderful book, *Seeing Through Maps: Many Ways to See the World*, which explores the meandering border between map-making and perception. Maps are ways of seeing the world, refracted through the lenses of identity, culture, and place. This book includes [one of my favorite maps](#), viewable in the Boston Public Library's [online archive](#), the upside-down map which inverts our customary view of the world by placing the Southern Hemisphere on top. There's nothing like a change in perspective to help you see which end is really up.

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