

# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## The Mediation Trainer's Toolbox

Sabine Walsh (Sabine Walsh Mediation) · Friday, April 5th, 2013

Having spent the last few weeks immersed in mediation theory, conflict theory, negotiation theory and a variety of other theories for various projects, including the preparation of a mediation training course, I feel the need for a little practicality. So today I thought I would share with my fellow trainers and mediators a few practical tools which I use in mediation training. This is nowhere near an exhaustive list, now would I use all of these all the time, but I would have found some suggestions like this very useful when I was starting out in training, and therefore hope others might do so too.

In filling out post training feedback sheets, mediation students have consistently suggested that the possibility of seeing some video footage of “real” mediators in action would be helpful to them. While they all value the learning that comes from live role plays they also are keen to see how an experienced mediator conducts him or herself, or how a real mediation might look in practice. Prompted by this feedback, I set off in search of mediation videos which I could use in my training courses, not yet sure how they would fit into the very interactive, hands on training I was used to delivering.

Many months and a good few trainings later, I am now thoroughly convinced of the benefits of many of the video mediation resources which are available. Some of these include the following:

- As openers for a course, and to ease students into the realm of mediation, I like humorous clips, often cartoons, such as the Three Little Pigs go to Mediation, produced by the US Veteran's Association, which sees the well-known dispute between the three pigs and the Big Bad Wolf being mediated by the Wise Old Owl ([http://www.va.gov/orm/Mediation/Pigs\\_all\\_scenes.swf](http://www.va.gov/orm/Mediation/Pigs_all_scenes.swf))
- Likewise, Zap Dramatic ([www.zapdramatic.com](http://www.zapdramatic.com)) have also produced some excellent animated scenarios which allow interaction from the audience to direct how a mediation or negotiation progresses, with often amusing consequences.
- For more in depth mediation skills training then, my two favourite resources are the 7 hours of mediation videos that accompany Frenkel and Stark's new edition of the Practice of Mediation: A Video Integrated Text (2012) and the mediation videos produced by the JAMS foundation and available free of charge to lecturers and trainers. ([www.jamsadr.org](http://www.jamsadr.org)) The former is excellently laid out for the trainer, with three mediation scenarios being played out in full, using different mediators, which show different styles of mediation. Each mediation can be watched in its entirety, or a menu will allow the viewer to select different stages of the mediation, which are then discussed in the relevant chapters of the textbook. I have found these videos particularly useful for showing students different styles of mediation, from evaluative to transformative, for example. It can also be helpful to give students an idea of certain aspects of the process, such as the mediator's opening statement, before they attempt it themselves in a role-play scenario.

I would not consider jettisoning role-plays in favour of videos by any means, the best way to learn is still by doing, but videos such as these can demystify the process for students, and can also show more realistic scenarios, particularly those involving high levels of emotion for example, than roles played out by the students can. A greater level of detail can also be demonstrated.

Videos can also be helpful in lectures or shorter teaching sessions, which do not allow for role-play or other interactive activities or for livening up what could otherwise be a potentially dull lecture. Just one example would be a YouTube clip of two kids from New Zealand describing their role as Peer mediators “it makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside” which I used in a lecture on mediation in schools. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epqhgg1bt44>

Staying in the realm of technology, the challenge of often inadequate face to face time with trainees can be met to a degree by engaging some online learning tools. Webinars, for example, can be a useful way of getting some of the less exciting aspects of mediation across to students, in their own time, such as legal structures around mediation or more procedural aspects. This technology can also be used, as I have recently discovered, to make videos and other materials available to students in between face to face sessions, therefore maximising the value of the latter. Some negotiation and conflict exercises are also now available online.

The Kraybill Conflict Styles Inventory, for example, is an accessible and cost effective way of introducing conflict styles to students. They can take the inventory online from their own homes, and (if so set up by the trainer) print out their own results and then bring them to the session for further discussion and exploration, again freeing up time that might otherwise have been used filling out the questionnaire. [www.riverhousepress.com](http://www.riverhousepress.com)

Turning then to other resources that can be useful for mediation trainers, I have only to look through the stacks of books on and around my desk to see that more traditional media still play a significant role. In training new mediators, particularly, it can be a challenge to find materials and resources that are sufficiently thorough but still comprehensible and accessible to students. Mediation being such a fluid and often intuitive discipline, books on mediation can be very theoretical and wordy, and thus prove difficult for new mediators to get to grips with.

While I am still very much in favour of producing my own course Handbook, one book I regularly recommend to students is *The Mediator's Handbook*, the latest, updated and revised edition of which is now available. (Jennifer E. Beer, 2012.) Set out in a clear, logical fashion, it groups the wide variety of mediation skills discussed into people skills, problem skills and process skills. With the aid of diagrams and the odd cartoon, it breaks down the mediation process in a systematic but not overly prescriptive fashion. Similarly, Tony Whatling's *Mediation Skills and Strategies* (2012) sets out just that, with good use of examples and just enough detail to avoid over simplifying these skills and strategies. I find these books useful for myself as well as for the students, as they can assist in bringing a trainer back to basics and providing you with a reminder of keys skills, skills that we are often using so much that we forget to (and how to) explain and teach them.

One final book that I only recently came across, but which deserves a mention, particularly when it comes to more general training in conflict management and intervention is Gary T. Furlong's *Conflict Resolution Toolbox*, (2006) which sets out eight of the most well-known conflict mapping models, and applies all of them to individual scenarios, and then to the same scenario, in order to illustrate the different approaches very clearly. I have found great use in this one, in preparing worksheets and exercises in conflict mapping for students and for giving them access to a number of different approaches, so that they can choose which suits their own style.

These are just a few tips, much more could be said about textbooks, training games, exercises, approaches and course designs. It's a start though, and I have found them useful. Happy training!

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