

Kluwer Mediation Blog

And A Little Child Shall Lead Them – Peacemakers 2019

Joel Lee (National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law) · Friday, July 12th, 2019

I have in previous entries ([July 2012](#) and [July 2013](#)) written about a peer mediation initiative called the [Peacemakers](#) Conference. The purpose of the Peacemakers Conference is to teach 13-16 year olds how to resolve conflicts amicably in a workshop cum competition format. This year's Peacemakers Conference was held from 17 to 19 July 2019.

As in previous years, we asked students from different schools to work together to create a visual metaphor for mediation. This started in 2015 and has become a regular feature in the Peacemakers Conference. Metaphors from previous years be found in the entries for [November 2015](#), [August 2016](#), [July 2017](#) and [July 2018](#).

This year, the students came up with 7 visual metaphors which I would like to share with readers in this entry. For each of these, images or videos of the metaphor are shared along with a description of the metaphor.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Sean Lim and the Peacemakers Facilitation team for capturing the the description and images of each of the metaphors that appear below.

1. Mediation is like a Wire



Mediation is like a wire; it connects the handphone to the portable charger. In the case of

mediation, when the two parties come together, the mediation session helps them to connect with each other, so that they can find a solution that is agreeable to the both of them. It helps the two parties to work together and cooperatively to reach a certain desired outcome. Just like mediation, a wire connects two appliances together. In mediation, the parties bring two opposing points of view and what they want is very different. This is similar to a phone and portable charger. They are very different things and they serve different purposes. The wire helps them both to achieve their purposes.

2. Mediation is a Flying Cow



Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

NO, it's a FLYING COW!

Indeed, mediation is a like a flying cow. You might be thinking, holy cow! What a strange metaphor. How is a flying cow related to mediation? Well, the two actually have more in common than you think, especially whenever two parties have beef with each other.

Firstly, a flying cow represents the 3 core pillars of mediation: neutrality, confidentiality, and party autonomy.

Neutrality: The cow is not biased towards any farmer, as long as it is well fed and taken care of, which represents how mediators are not biased towards any party and are an impartial third party. Their hooves are split into 2 equal parts, and their weight is distributed equally on both of these, which shows how the cow is even and fair.

Confidentiality: Have you ever heard a cow talk? Neither have we. This ensures the contents are always secret and private, maintaining confidentiality: everything that goes into the cow, will stay in the cow, just like what is said in the mediation will stay in the mediation.

Party Autonomy: With wings, the cow also has the freedom to fly wherever it wants and these allow it to choose and commit to a destination. Also, the wings can allow it to fly and look at the situation from different perspectives and find a solution. Similarly, parties voluntarily generate their solution which they have ownership of. This represents party autonomy!

Secondly, the cow also represents the mediation process itself as it has four stomachs. When the cow eats, it first chews the food just enough to swallow. The partly chewed food travels to the first two stomachs, where it is stored. These first two stomachs represent the first two steps in the mediation process, opening and information gathering+checking as all the food has not been digested yet, just like how the information still needs to be processed and reframed by a mediator (which are like enzymes in the stomach). Here, the information is still being broken down, and parties may face conflicts or misunderstandings, similar to how cows may face indigestion.

When the cow is full from this eating process, it rests. This is akin to how sometimes, parties may get physically or emotionally tired from the long processes and mediations and may need a break after passionately conveying their feelings. Later, the cow coughs up bits of unchewed food and chews them completely before swallowing again. The food then goes through the third and fourth stomachs, where it is fully digested. This is just like how all of the secrets, which are represented by the unchewed food of the cow, will need to be brought up and broken down further into their underlying problems and interests in order to continue on with a successful mediation. Since cows chew and digest their food very thoroughly, it represents the skill and depth with which a mediator must understand the issue at hand so as to guide the parties to a realistic solution. Finally after all the information has been uncovered and a solution has been found, the mediation can be closed, similar to the fully digested food in a cow's fourth stomach.

As the food passes through the cow's four stomachs, only the nutrients from food will be absorbed, while harmful and irrelevant substances will be excreted as... bullshit. This is parallel to mediation; what remains is only positive and valuable information, while the negative and irrelevant sentiments are discarded or reframed during the process, so both parties can mOOve on a happier note.

Lastly, cows are known for their milk. Milking a cow is hard work but no doubt worth it because the milk obtained is really precious. After thinking hard, the 2 parties will be satisfied with the milk of their labours and the mediator is rewarded with the satisfaction of mending a strained relationship. Cows may face stress if they are separated from their herd, or have a change in environment. This is similar to how mediation can sometimes be stressful, because of the high stakes situation, but these feelings get better eventually, just like a calm cow.

3. Mediation is a Life Form



It is the only reason why nature is alive. The reason why we have the environment around us. Why animals have emotions. Why animals live, grow and die. Life form is the only thing that divides the world of living and the dead.

The reason we chose the metaphor of the heart is because all living things have a heart, visible or not. Like a shell, the heart is not alive. The veins that represent life form. They are the reason why the heart is alive.

Just like the deoxygenated blood enters the heart through the veins, mediations first start off as a conflict entering mediation. Just like how we need to get rid of the deoxygenated blood, we come in into a mediation with conflicts that we hope to resolve.

And the blood exits filled with oxygen – just like in a mediation, where the parties come out with a solution and certainly feeling better.

The heart is necessary to keep all creatures alive, just like mediation is important to sustain relationships and solve problems. The feelings we feel from our hearts are just like a mediation is filled with the emotions of parties.

Emotions may cause arguments, but it could also cause an argument to be resolved. Being alive. Being in this world. Allows you to think, sympathise and empathise with the other which are the reasons why arguments are resolved.

But being alive. But being in this world. You will have different perspectives which lead to arguments. Positivity and negativity do exist within us, and they are what makes us who we are.

This is why we chose life forms in a form of a heart. We chose 3 different hearts and as you swipe you can see how a negative situation can be turned into a positive situation through mediation. As the colours slowly seep through the veins it shows the progression of how things surely will get better after a mediation.

Life forms. Being alive. We will be the reason why fights happen but mediation shows us how people can also resolve their fight together. Because mediation is bringing in dark problems but coming out with bright possibilities.

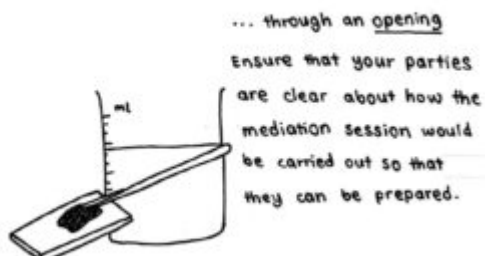
4. Mediation is a Microscope

Mediation is like a microscope ?.



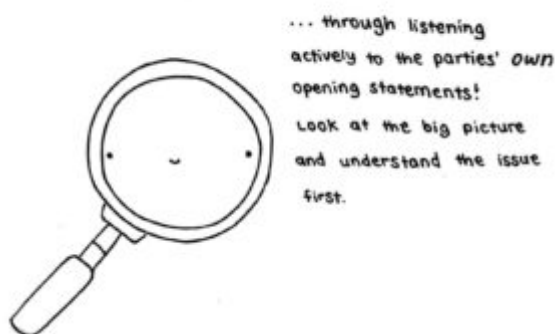
The more ?zoom in?, the bigger the picture gets. The more you focus, you clearer you see ?.

step 1 : Prepare your specimen (parties)



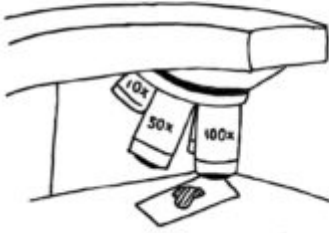
Whenever you use a microscope, the first thing you have to do is prepare your specimen. Similarly in mediation, you have to ensure that both parties are clear about the mediation session so that they can be prepared to cooperate.

step 2 : Examine your slide



Next, you have to examine your slide. When you look through the microscope, it is similar to how a mediator listens carefully to the parties' opening statements and hears what they are saying, in order to see the big picture and understand the issues. The microscope also has different lenses to allow the viewer to see different things. The more you look, the clearer it is.

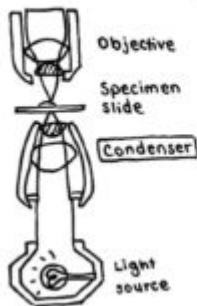
Step 3: Choose your objective lens



Ensure that you are clear about what objectives your parties want to achieve after the session.

The mediator should also choose an objective lens, by being clear about what objectives the parties want to achieve after the session.

Step 4: Be the LIGHT!

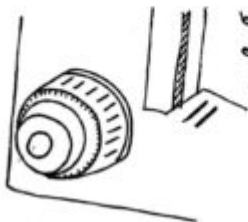


You want to shed light on the party's position (specimen) in order to understand his/her interests.

In order to do so, you need a condenser - SUMMARISE!!

The microscope also requires a light in order to allow you to see clearly. Similarly, although parties may not always understand each other, the mediator sheds light on the issues to help them understand each other better.

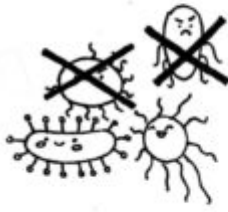
Step 5: Dig deeper for clearer image



In order to gain clarity, dig deeper by asking open-ended probing questions. Use 5W1H.

In order for the light to reach the specimen, you also need a condenser, which is similar to the mediator's function of summarizing. When you zoom in, sometimes what you see is not clear. In order to get the clear picture, you need to focus on asking open-ended questions, such as the 5W and 1H.

Step 6 : Problem Solving



Finally! You can identify their underlying motives – both healthy and unhealthy for the relationship of the parties. Get rid of the baddies by giving the parties the autonomy to suggest solutions!

Finally, the last step is problem-solving. Once the mediator has identified the underlying problem, the mediator can help the parties problem-solve, giving them the autonomy to suggest solutions.

5. Mediation is a Lighthouse

http://wolterskluwerblogs.com/mediation/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2019/07/IMG_4768.mp4

When two ships ? are lost at sea and are battling the rocky waves ?, lacking any light ? to guide them, they drift further and further away from their destination – the shore ?

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http://wolterskluwerblogs.com/mediation/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2019/07/IMG_4770.mp4

This is similar to how without mediation, two opposing parties will be battling their unresolved issues (rocky waves ?) and will find it hard to resolve their problems, and will end up simply causing further misunderstandings and get worse. ??

Moreover, in the darkness ?, the ships may crash into each other and cause damage to each other, and themselves.

Similarly, without mediation, actions by both parties may result in hurt on both ends ?, causing harm to their relationship ?

Therefore, mediation is a lighthouse, because just as how a lighthouse guides ships ? lost at sea who are at risk of being damaged due to the harsh waves and rocks, mediation helps two parties SEA clearly, water-ver the problem.

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http://wolterskluwerblogs.com/mediation/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2019/07/IMG_4772.mp4

Mediation allows you to brave the harsh waves of conflict against all odds and eventually come to an agreement ??? just like a lighthouse shines light on the solution! (water!) ??

6. Mediation is like Braces

http://wolterskluwerblogs.com/mediation/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2019/07/IMG_8503.mp4

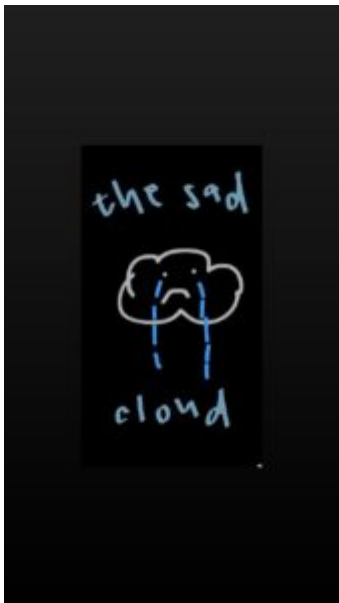
The reason as we think mediation is just like braces is because braces bring teeth closer together, just like how mediation brings people closer together. The gaps between the teeth are just like the gaps between the relationship of the two parties, which is brought closer together by braces/mediation.

The pain that comes in the process of having braces is just like the pain of disputes between the parties. It might seem tough, but eventually, after the pain, the outcome is a beautifully straight row of teeth, just like how the relationship of the parties are made to be beautiful.

The retainers that come after braces ensure that the teeth don't become crooked again, just like how the parties will keep to their solution and carry it out!

7. Mediation is like a Rainbow

Mediation is like a rainbow, which connects both the sun and the rain cloud. The sun and cloud are very different, they are basically nature's polar opposites. On their own, they represent each extreme – the sun is very hot, while the cloud is very rainy.





But somehow, the rainbow manages to connect both and the two can form the fruitful conclusion of a pretty rainbow.



Neutrality. The sun does not care about what kind of clouds there are, big or small. Neither do the clouds care what kind of sunlight shines upon them. Either way, a rainbow will still be formed. When the sun and rainbow meet, it signifies that no matter the conflict is, it is possible for the mediator to step in and resolve the conflict.

Party autonomy. The rainbow forms only because the sun and the rain come together as one, and not due to any other reason. This signifies how both disputing parties have ownership of the situation and come together to solve the problem on their own.

Confidentiality. When a rainbow forms, it is actually because the light reflects off the water droplets in the air, but the process is not very obvious and cannot be seen. Therefore, this shows how the process of mediation will be kept confidential.

??????????????

That brings us to the end of another installment of visual metaphors for mediation! I hope readers

found some of these as inspiring as we did!


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The graphic features a black background with white text and a circular icon. The icon depicts a magnifying glass over a group of stylized human figures, representing a search or investigation process. The Wolters Kluwer logo is positioned at the bottom left of the graphic.

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