

Mediation Center

Providing Community Based and Court Connected Mediation Options

Mediation News

May 2018



Center Updates

- 414 cases have been mediated this fiscal year with a 91% agreement/settlement rate, serving over 700 clients. Our center has also received an additional 412 referrals as we enter the last quarter of FY18.
- Our Family/School Mediation Program has mediated 38 cases this fiscal year. The center's volunteers have mediated 90% of the student cases at Reid Middle School with a 97% success rate.
- We now have 12 active volunteers after the completion of our Basic Mediation Training, which recruited 4 volunteers.

Upcoming Training Courses

Restorative Practices Training

Our center will be providing the second advanced mediation training of this fiscal year on June 19th. The training is adapted from Dr. Lois Edmund's NAFCM webinar and the Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice. Various topics will be covered, including but not limited to, team building circles and circles on harm.

For more information, please contact Kayla Wendling at (413) 344-4812.

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Recent Training Courses

Annual Basic Mediation Training

We have successfully completed our Third Annual Basic Mediation Training in April. Mediation Center Coordinator, Kayla Wendling, facilitated the course with a total of 7 participants.

Our next Basic Mediation Training will take place in spring 2019.



The Elephant in the Brain

As mediators, we are already working hard to move parties past their positions to figure out what their interests are. Although it isn't apparent right away, we have the skills to figure out why things are so important to the participants and how they can reach a resolution that truly addresses their needs. So what happens when individuals think they have positive motives, but in reality the underlying motives aren't as good looking as they would like them to be?

Kevin Simler and Robin Hanson wrote a book titled *The Elephant in the Brain* which talks about how selfish, hidden motives exist within us without even realizing it – a blind spot in the mind of some sort. Simler and Hanson provide the following definitions on the various taboos that help one understand this interpersonal challenge:

the elephant in the *room*, n. An important issue that people are reluctant to acknowledge or address; a social taboo.

the elephant in the *brain*, n. An important but unacknowledged feature of how our minds work; an introspective taboo.

One example of hidden motives that exist among many involves education. When asked why people go to school, a typical response would be “to learn”. However Simler and Hanson pose the questions, why do students enjoy when classes get cancelled? Why do employers pay more for irrelevant majors? A response that violates norms may be that individuals go to school so that they can show off their intelligence to others, but that response would not fare well in society and may not be something we are ever conscious of until we face the true underlying reasons as to why we do things.

Although mediators aren't sitting in a room with scholars who are masking the real reason as to why they attended so many years of schooling, they may be dealing with situations where hidden motives exist. It is said that on some level people know that what they are asking for is not really what it is all about. Once the hidden motives are revealed and understood, parties can work better to understand themselves. As mediators, it is important to keep in mind that if we can *delicately* use our foundational skills to help parties see what they aren't quite yet aware of, then we are fostering a better result that encompasses what individuals really want. It helps promote honesty and courage, which is difficult in conflicting situations. The book notes “humans get along spectacularly well. Our motives matter less than what we manage to achieve by them”. Hopefully as mediators we can help parties move past those hidden motives and move towards a collaborative resolution that *truly* satisfies the interests of all involved.

Simler, Kevin, and Robin Hanson. *The Elephant in the Brain: Hidden Motives in Everyday Life*.
Oxford University Press, 2018.

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