

## “INSIDEOUT: Self-Reflection for Conflict Resolution Professionals”

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### INTRODUCTION

In their book “**Bringing Peace in the Room**”,\* the authors write that there are 3 stages to the development of mediators:

Training in the basic skills;  
Developing a greater intellectual understanding of the process; and  
**Developing the personal qualities that make us effective dispute resolvers:  
Self-awareness, Presence, Authenticity, Intuition, Empathy.**

They proffer that the mediator is inevitably part of the conflict which he or she seeks to resolve; The mediator is influential in shaping the process, understanding the conflict and “knowing” from an unconscious level, the shape of the conflict as the parties see it.

Each of us has different qualities and different strengths. These have often been shaped by Time, History, Fears, Aspirations, Failures, Family, Ethnicity, Personal Challenges, Level of Intuition and Intent. I want to focus on the third prong: The personal qualities that make us effective dispute resolvers.

### SEE ME, SEE YOU

#### **What are the stories that shape us?....**

My thoughts about being a conflict resolver developed in my early home life when I was often exasperated by the family disputes which seemed endless and forever resurfacing. My grandmother was the peace-keeper and I admired her patient, gentle, yet stern approach to getting us to let go and be done with the matter. First, I chose to be a lawyer. Later I was introduced to mediation and arbitration.

Chose a time when you can center yourself for about five (5) minutes. Take 3-4 short breaths, sit quietly and see what spontaneously comes into your mind as you focus on the time you first realized that you had the thought or feeling that you’d like to help others resolve conflict in a positive way. Now remember with your body and emotions what prompted you to do so. Who was there? When and where was it? How did it surface in your hopes, ideas and feelings, your intentions? Re-live those days. Now share your story in a journal or with a respected colleague. Ask the colleague to share his or her story.

### PERSONAL SELF-DEVELOPMENT

#### **Gratitude**

Each morning as you rise: Establish a routine, Center Yourself, Find Yourself, Do Yogic breathwork, Exercise, Be alone, Meditate, Pray or as Denzel Washington says: “**Give Gratitude: Thank you for Grace, Mercy, Peace, Prosperity, Understanding**”. Others say repeat a mantra such as one of these: “**I am blessed; I am strong; I am prosperous; I am focused; Everyone makes mistakes and so do I; I am love and I am loved,** or “**What can I do today to give everything that I’ve got.**” (Anchoring)

#### **Empathy**

If you can see yourself, know yourself, you can be prepared to see others and how they see themselves, empathize, perceive the conflict and view differently even the simplest of concepts. We are all the same human dynamic at our core, whether, baker, cook, waitress, salesman, lawyer, etc.

Try some mindfulness exercises or listen to Brene Brown’s Short YouTube video on Empathy:  
[https://www.google.com/search?q=brene+brown+empathy&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enUS709US709&oq=Brene+Brpwm+e&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.5977j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=brene+brown+empathy&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS709US709&oq=Brene+Brpwm+e&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.5977j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

When you stay grounded in yourself, you can seek to understand and to be understood. You emanate a spirit of **“I seek to connect with you today in this dialogue which we will have and I want to be a part of the framework for resolution. Today, I will give my all.”**

### **Less Anxiety, Stress, Mild Depression**

**How often have you gotten up some mornings, hurried to your hearing room, mediation site or courtroom , rushed in, greeted the parties and began to notice that something was missing? You are what was missing. How often have you have worked for a long time with your parties and they are still at impasse?** One reason may be that you are not in the game.

Ask yourself: **Why am I here?** What am I intended to do? Who needs to talk more? Do we need a change of venue for a short while? Know that failure is there to point you in the right direction. Accept that you can access understanding and intuition when you find yourself and quiet yourself. **Method.**

Pause, Take Several Short Breaths, Stop talking or Actively engaging,  
Find yourself by anchoring, Do some self-talk or self-worth affirmations,  
LISTEN TO YOUR BODY, OBSERVE THE BODY LANGUAGE IN THE ROOM,  
Observe what is occurring with the others in the room, Pay attention to the parties' emotional clues, unacknowledged feelings, concerns, Access your internal clues, Accept the answers, Then Re-engage, based on your assessment.

### **Facing Feedback/Smackback**

Did you receive a bad evaluation or simply a party in the session orally blames you for the lack of a resolution? I urge you to find truth in the response, no matter how it was delivered. **Method.**

Collect yourself...Breathe deeply...Understand and be curious about all aspects of the feedback. Engage in an Examination (Fluff or Substance/Anger or Fear), Use your breathe and signals from your body to identify judgments, strong emotions yours and theirs, Be Empathy, Connect to the “what is”, Recover. Then be proactive in how you integrate the feedback into your delivery and into your emotional intelligence/intuition/energy field.

### **A Model for Joint Reflection and Feedback**

**One group of mediators in California have formed a self-reflection group to help with their work as mediators.** Their weekly group and 2 partner meetings are based on materials and techniques in the book *InsideOut*, by Gary J. Friedman. It is chronicled in “ SCPI: INSIDEOUT:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqU45jn-GhE>

### **Some In the Moment Tools:**

In 2016, in a response to a reporter about the possibilities of who could win the presidential election, President Obama said: “Anything can happen...!” In the circle of humanity, we know that anything can happen: Colin Kaepernick, football player and social activist, is now the \$6 Billion Dollar Nike man.

When there is an impasse, do not slump, lower your enthusiasm, act or show on your face that a tragedy has happened. Rather, silently, ask yourself, “What is **the** next right step?”, “Where do I go next?” Say to yourself: “It is going to be alright!” or “What can I learn from this experience?”

Seek to connect and consciously think: **“ I can see myself in you and your conflict, and you in me when I am in conflict.”** Connect to the emotional framework underlying the parties concerns and carry that understanding into the discussion of the solutions.

Summon your intuition and empathy, then ask: “What is **my** next right step?” If the answer is the parties are not ready to settle, **Accept the answer!! Sometimes it is not time to settle, or something, or someone is missing.**

In moments like this, think of the concepts in Art Williams book: “**All you can do, is all you can do, and all you can do is enough.**” Essentially, in real time, you are grounding yourself again, to pull on the wisdom and information which you gained from Steps 1 and 2 in your training. Once you ground yourself, your intuition will also kick in, your perceptions of the synchronicities of what is occurring in the room and what occurred in the conflict will seem more evident to you. Find patience, slow down and listen for the human spirits of each person there to guide you in being their guide. The process answers will come.

## **MIND, BODY, AND SOUL**

### **Physical and emotional health**

Your health and well-being are your tools just as your knowledge and understanding of the process. **Be Open to Change in your Health**, both emotional and physical. When your body is giving you signals of change or discomfort, **Stop, Breathe, Be Silent, Listen intently**, Ask yourself: “**What are my next steps?**” “Where do I go next?” **Wait for the Answer. Act.** It is also an opportunity to explore future good health options.

Change, Introspection, Patience, Contemplation are part of one of my favorite poems: “**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**”, by MD poet, Robert Frost. He writes:

Whose woods these are, I think I know.  
His house is in the village, though.  
He will not see me stopping here to watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer to stop without a farmhouse near...

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep. And miles to go before I sleep.

Please remember, when you enter the room to help others, you have made a commitment to “the miles to go before you sleep”.

## **RESOURCES**

***Bringing Peace in the Room: How the Personal Qualities of the Mediator Impact the Process of Conflict Resolution*** by Daniel Bowling and David Hoffman, Jossey-Bass, 2003

***InsideOut***, by Gary J. Friedman, Section of Dispute Resolution, American Bar Association, ABA Publishing, 2014

Listening and breathe work exercises herein are based on inspiration and techniques by Mark Nepo in his books: ***7000 Ways to Listen : Staying Close to What Is Sacred***, Atria Books, 2013 and ***The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want By Being Present to the Life You Have***, Conari Press 2000.

“**Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing**”, audiotape by Andrew Weil, MD, Sounds True Inc., 1999

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