

**Conflict Coaching As Mediation or IEP Support:
Preparing Parties to Optimize ADR Processes**

**CADRE Conference,
October 2025**

Tricia S. Jones, Ph.D.

And

**Timothy K. Hedeem,
Ph.D.**

1



1



Welcome!

**We're so glad
to have you
here.**



2

Goals for Today

- Considering An Abbreviated Conflict Coaching Process
- Coaching Parties To Participate in IEPs and Mediations
- Mediator and IEP Facilitators Infusing Conflict Coaching Elements Into Mediation/IEP

3



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

3

Very Abbreviated Model

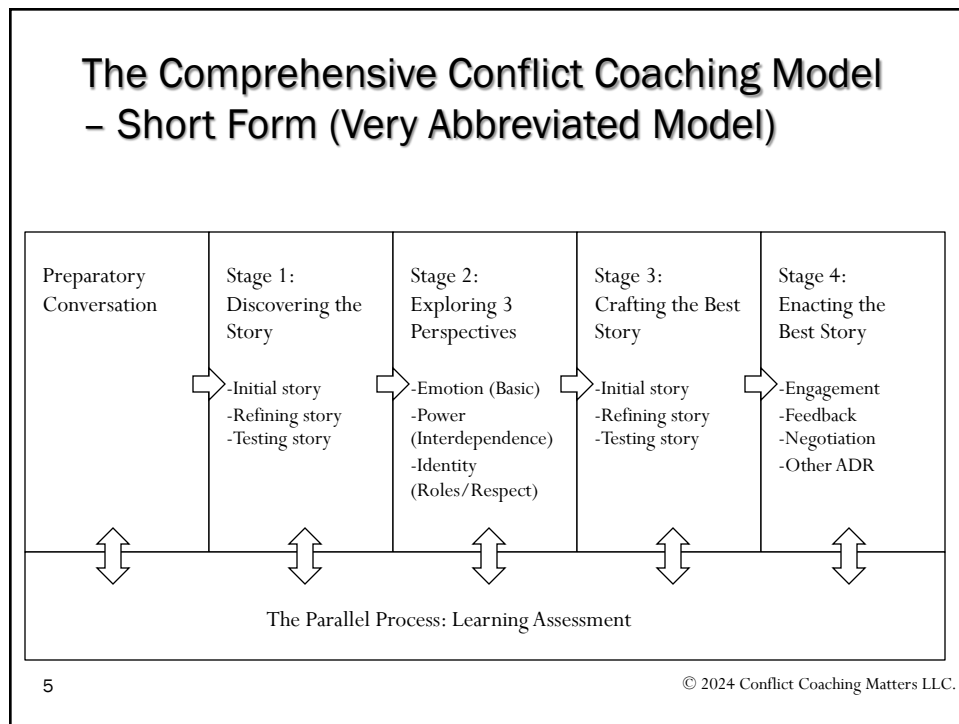


4



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

4



5

Stage Adaptations – Prep Convo (2-3 minutes)

- Time frame of conflict
 - Immediate need
 - Heightened concern
- Emphasize ability to use further processes
- Confidentiality
- Voluntary/Transparent
- **Clarification of Role Critical**

6


© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

6

Stage Adaptations – Stage One (10 minutes)

- Stay with Basic Questions (Handhold Stage One)
- Key Refining
 - Urgency
 - Changing nature of conflict
 - Possible expansion to more parties
- Key Testing
 - Hostile Attributions (Assumptions about intentional, hurtful behavior)

7



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

7

Stage Adaptations – Stage Two (10-15 minutes)

- Emotions
 - Key Emotions Questions
- Power
 - Interdependence
- Identity
 - Roles and/or Respect

8



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

8

Stage Adaptations – Stage Three (10 minutes)

- Start Ideal (if resistance move to Realistic)
- Certainty Questions to Realistic
- Key Testing (whether finished)
 - 1-10 scale or equivalent
 - Workable?
 - Possible?
 - Effective?
 - Confident?

9



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

9

Stage Adaptations – Stage Four (10 minutes)

Check-In – How Ready to Plan?

Action Planning

Skills Development Options (choose most critical)

- Engagement
- Feedback
- Negotiation

10



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

10

Stage Adaptations

– Ending the Session (2-3 minutes)

- Summary of Action Plan (if any)
- Inquiry About Needed Additional Sessions
- Inquiry About Referrals/Information on Referrals to other ADR processes
- Inquiry About Check-Ins
- Reminder about Confidentiality
- Questions?
- Affirmation

11



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

11

Video Examples – Peer Conflict Coaching SPED



12



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

12

Conflict Coaching Matters



When Would This Be Helpful?

How Would This Be Helpful?

13

What are the challenges and advantages with your IEP Processes?





- How Could
Conflict
Coaching
Elements
Help?

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

14

14

Common Challenges with IEP Meetings

Problems

- Power imbalances – parents not “heard”
- Lack of Collaboration
- Lack of Time
- Disagreements over Goals and/or Interventions
- Lack of Trust

Solutions

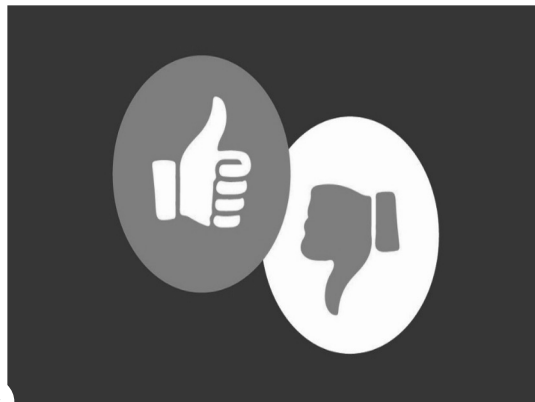
- Give parents/family different voice
- Give parents/family more control over process
- Clarify IEP process before hand
- Clarify roles of parties

15

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

15

What are the challenges and advantages with your mediations?



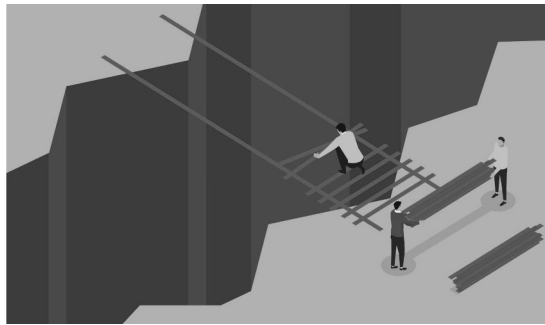
16

- How Could Conflict Coaching Elements Help?

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

16

What are the challenges and advantages with other processes?



17

• How Could Conflict Coaching Elements Help?

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

17



How Coaches Can Prepare Parties for Mediation or Facilitation or Other ADR



- What Are These Processes
- Why Would You Use Them?
- How Can You Use Them Well?

18

What Are These Processes?

- How much do parties understand these processes?
- How well are they prepared for them?
- How well do their initial experiences often go?



19

Conflict Coaching Matters

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

19

Sanderson & Goldman 2023 Remedial and Special Education, vol 44(3)

Using 1,183 responses from a national survey, we addressed the following research questions: (a) How satisfied are parents with their child's current IEP? and (b) What characteristics of the parent, child, family-professional partnership, and IEP meeting predict greater parent satisfaction with their child's IEP? Approximately 40% of parents reported some degree of dissatisfaction with their child's IEP. Several child characteristics were associated with the most extreme levels of satisfaction. Results of a regression analysis indicated that, for this sample, parent, child, family-professional partnership, and IEP meeting characteristics significantly predicted parent satisfaction, with characteristics of the IEP meeting among the strongest predictors.

20

Conflict Coaching Matters

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

20



Special Education/IEP Mediation

Very Little Current Research on Parent Satisfaction with Mediation

21 © 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

21

Explain the Processes

A coaching conversation about IEP and/or Mediation Processes can be very helpful.

- Explain possible processes
- Explain how they work
- Explain when and how they can be accessed
- Explain how the party can best participate in them.

How much of this do you do now?

Share some of your best practices at your table.

22 © 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

22

Coaching Parties to Maximize Their Success in Mediation/IEP



23

Helping Them “Engage” Well in IEPs
and Mediation – Expanding the
Roadways Conversation

What Are Their Presentation Goals?
What Are Their Substantive Goals?
How Can They Validate the Other?
How Can They Handle Difficulties?
How Can They Give Feedback?
How Can They Negotiate?

24

24

+



Presentation Goals

- How do I want to be seen?
- Introductory Comments
 - Who
 - With what experience
 - With what expertise
 - With what roles
- How will I respond if I'm not being seen as desired?

25

25

+



Substantive Goals

- What do I really want/need out of this?
- What do I *really* want for others?
- What do I *really* want for the relationship?
- How will I behave in this conversation to
 - Show I want these results?
 - Increase the likelihood of getting these results?

26

26

+ Perspective Taking and Validation



- Affirmation
 - “I appreciate”
 - “Thank you for . . .”
 - “I realize”
 - “I see”
- Positive Statement of Their Perspective/Their Goals



27

27

+ Perspective Taking and Validation



- Questions
 - Prepare 1-2 affirming and open-ended questions for other parties
 - Start with “How” and “What”
 - Ask more about “What’s Working”
 - Ask more about “Why It Matters To Them”
 - Ask them about “what you don’t understand”

28

28

+

Conflict Coaching Matters

Potholes – Handling Difficulties

- Plan for Requests:
 - To slow down
 - To repeat
 - To take a break
 - To share discomfort
 - “I am feeling concerned about the information you just presented”



29

29

+

Conflict Coaching Matters

Potholes – Handling Difficulties

- Plan for Disrespect
- Plan for Disagreement
 - With Issues
 - With Assumptions
 - With Responsibility
 - With Goals



30

30

+ Giving Feedback



- 1-2 KEY Issues
- Positive Language
 - Specific
 - About behavior
 - Depersonalized
- Ask for their Perspective
- Request Change
 - Change to . . .
 - Because
 - Can You/Will You?



31

31

+ Planning Negotiation



- 1-2 KEY Issues
- Deal-breaker Interests
- Brainstorming Options
- Criteria for Selection
- BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)

32

32

Let's Revisit Trish – Volunteers to Help Prepare Her for the IEP



33



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

33

Volunteers

- Presentation Goals
- Substantive Goals
- Validation/ Affirmation
- Validation/ Questions
- Potholes – Requests
- Giving Feedback

34

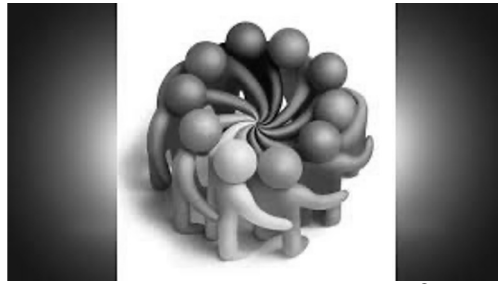


© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

34

Helping Them Problem Solve

Collaborative Negotiation



35

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

35

Helping Them Problem Solve

- Focus on Interests/Needs
- Seek Common Ground
- Create Solutions
- Set Clear Action



36

Conflict Coaching Matters

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

36

Focus on Interests and NOT Positions

Positions -

- Are predetermined outcomes or demands
 - Example: “You have to let me have a say in this school”
 - Example: “You have to follow my rules for me to listen to you.”

Interests –

- Are the needs and concerns that underlie the position
 - Example: “This community is important to me and I am concerned about its future.”
 - Example: “I need to have control over how this school is run in order to do my job as principal.”

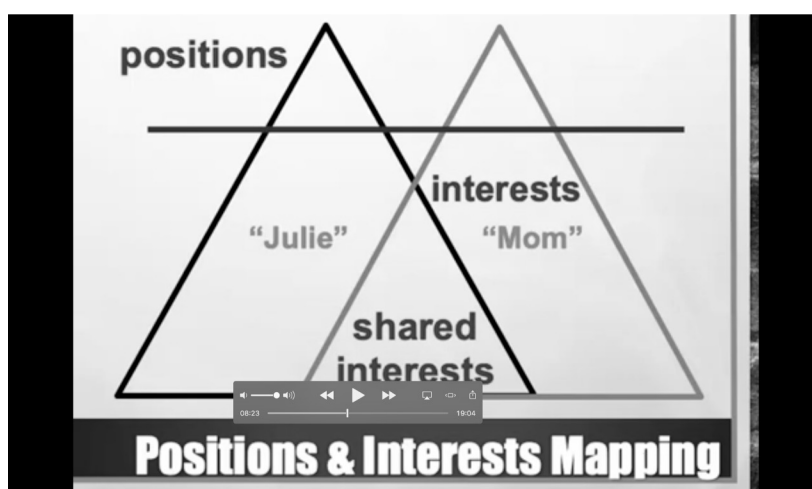
37



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

37

Interests Mapping



38



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

38

A Hypothetical Situation

Sara and Dwayne have a 10 year old son, DeJahn, (their only child) who has been identified as having severe ADHD and moderate autism. Sara and Dwayne divorced four years ago and tensions of supporting their son contributed to the divorce. In addition, there was domestic violence that resulted in restraining orders which limited contact. Since the divorce Sara has had sole custody and has been the primary caretaker. She has a relatively stable and constructive working relationship with DeJahn's elementary school and his district. They have been strongly supported emotionally and financially by Sara's mother. Last year Dwayne married Tanya and both have now been granted shared custody but with limitations. Dwayne and Tanya believe that the school has not been providing adequate support and intervention for DeJaun and want to have him receive more. They are threatening to escalate the case against Sara and the school district.

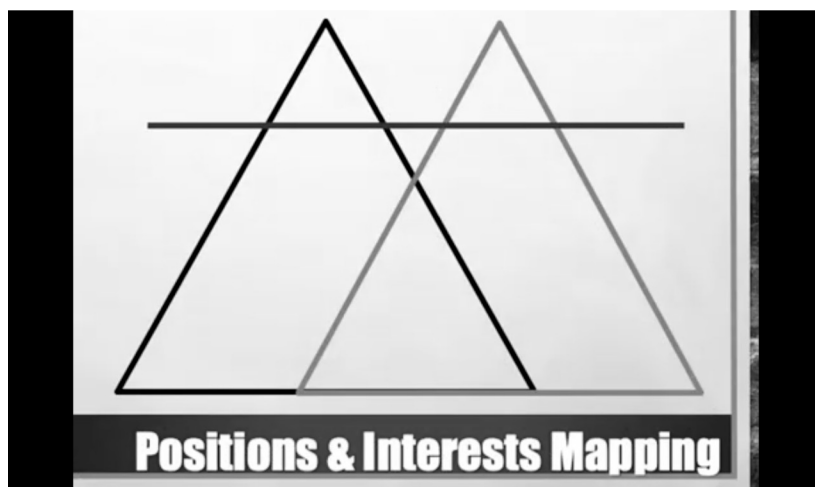
39



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

39

Help Them With an Interests Exploration – Let's Talk



40



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

40

Prioritize Interests and Seek Common Ground

- Which are Essential – DEAL BREAKERS
- Which are Preferred – Important but not Critical
- Which are Desirable – Nice but Not Necessary

41



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

41

Helping Shift from a Position to an Interest

- Why is that important to me?
- How will that help me meet my needs?
- How will this help:
 - Me?
 - The other person?
 - The relationship?
 - The organization?

42



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

42



Brainstorm Solutions

- This is a process of creating as many solutions as possible **BEFORE** you evaluate them to decide which are the best options.
- Otherwise, good ideas never have a chance to be suggested and discussed because people are too busy arguing over the first ideas introduced.

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

43

43

Test Options

Get several ideas on the table, then...

Gut response?

Fit with interests?

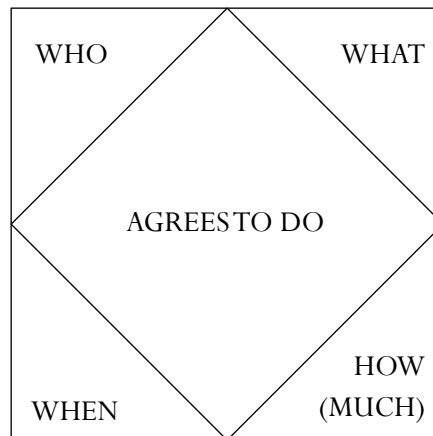
Workable?

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

44

44

Make a Clear Plan for Action



45

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

45

Have a Back-Up Plan

- What happens if you can't come to agreement?
- Help them develop a "back-up" plan – what they will do if they can't negotiate the conflict
- Have them think about the upsides and downsides of the back-up plan

46



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

46

Let's Help Sara Prepare for Mediation with Dwayne – As a Group

- Interests Exploration
 - Sara's/ Dwayne's
 - Priorities
- Brainstorming Solutions
- Testing Options
- Back-Up Plan

47



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

47



What Coaching Elements Mediators and Facilitators Can Infuse



- Caucus:
 - Exploring Drivers of Conflict
 - Visioning

48

Caucusing Infusions

✓Exploring Drivers of Conflict

- ✓Identity
- ✓Emotion
- ✓Power
- ✓Trust
- ✓Visioning

49

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

49



Check In With Identity

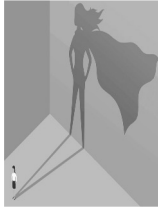
- What roles are affecting this conflict? (roles)
- Do you feel pulled between certain roles in terms of what to attain?
- Can you be your best self in this situation? (self-respect)
- What is important for you to stand up for? (values)
- Will you be able to stand up for what matters to you?

50

Conflict Coaching Matters

© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

50



Check in with Power

- How much do you need the other party to resolve this conflict without appealing?
- How much do they need you?
- How much choice and voice do you feel you have now?
- How ready are you to make a choice and move forward?
- What roadblocks are still there?

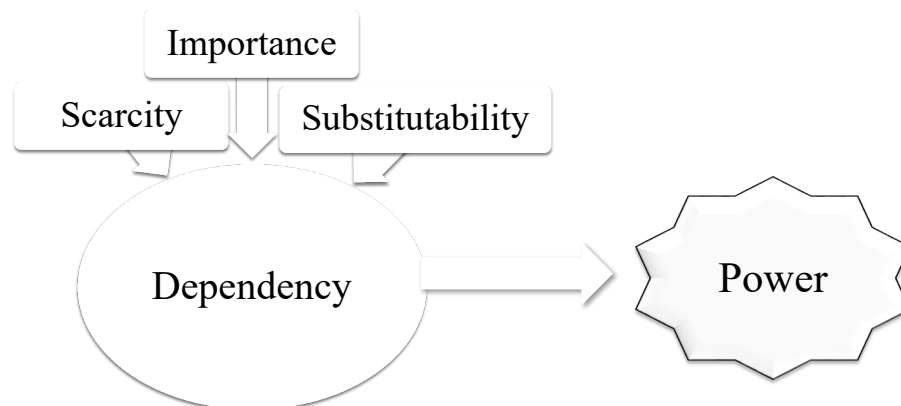
51



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

51

What Affects Your “Need”



52



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

52



Check in with Emotion

- How are you feeling about the conflict?
- What needs are driving the emotions?
- How are the emotions affecting your actions?
 - Positively? Negatively?
- What would make it feel better?

53



© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

53

Check In With Trust Issues?

How much do you trust each other on:

- Doing Your Expected Tasks (Contractual)?
- Communicating Openly, Honestly and Responsively (Communicating)?
- Having the Skills and Knowledge to Do What Is Needed?(Competence)?
- How do you know that? What do you see or hear that leads you to that assumption?



54

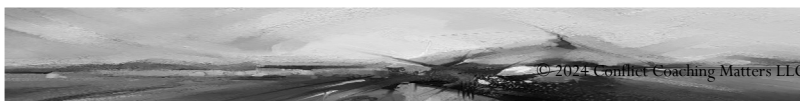


© 2024 Conflict Coaching Matters LLC.

54

What Is Your Trust Vision?

- Ideally what will be the trust relationship if you move forward as desired?
 - What will remain the same?
 - What will be different (what when where and how of trust behaviors?)
 - What protections will be in place (in the case of distrust)?
 - What accountability will be in place?
- What will help make that a reality?



55

55

Thank You!!



56

56