

November 2019

# MV Mediation Program

We Can Work it Out!

## Upcoming Events

### Workplace Conflict Workshop

Thursdays 12:00 pm OB Library

November 14

December 12

Call/email to register  
Spring

### Conflict Management Course

Tuesdays 8:45 am-10:15

Sept 17 - Nov 19

Call/email to register  
For managers/supervisors

### Introduction to Mediation Course

Thursdays 5:00 pm

Nov 7 - Dec 5

Call/email to register



### Youth Mediation Course

Become a mediator and earn a \$150 stipend. 15 hour course with lots of fun activities and great people. Email [info@mvmediation.org](mailto:info@mvmediation.org) for Sarah Safford our Youth Coordinator.

### Conflict Coaching Free Service for our



## MEDIATION MUSINGS

### Workplace Conflict: You need more tools in your tool bag

*Ugh I have to go to work.*

*Thank god Its Friday.*

*No one died wanting more days at work.*

Our culture is full of all kinds of negative messages about work and working. Here on the Vineyard we would all like to be happily following our passions and *living the dream*. But the reality for many is that work is stressful and depleting.

Its not the conflicts that one successfully resolves that eat away at us. We are likely proud of our efforts when we solve a conflict. We likely see the result as an accomplishment. Resolved conflicts can build us up and make us feel strong enough to face the next challenge.

It's the ones that got away, the arguments left unfinished, the patterns that never change, the unaddressed unfairness, the interpersonal difficulties never settled. These are the conflicts that make us miserable at work. If you ever stayed up at night chewing over a work situation and dreaded the morning alarm, unresolved conflict may be the explanation.

MVMP has been working to help. In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Oak Bluffs Library we are now presenting our sixth of seven 2019 lunchtime workplace conflict workshops. Upcoming is Toxic Workplaces on November 14 and Team building on December 12. We will probably repeat the series in the spring.

We also offer a course on workplace conflict that meets weekly. On Tuesday mornings, a cohort of managers and supervisors meet in a private ongoing course to discuss a professional conflict

## Community

Take advantage of our Conflict Coaching program. In two one hour sessions our Coaches can help you to rethink your approach to conflict situations. You will leave with a realistic plan to move forward with your life and become a more effective conflict resolver.

## Internship Available

Martha's Vineyard Mediation is looking for a part time intern facilitator. This position has a stipend. Duties include participation in the Youth Mediation program and organizational support. This internship can be great way to build your resume and work with some great people.

management text and offer each other suggestions and ideas about handling workplace conflicts. This group will complete their ten sessions in December. Participants earn a certificate in workplace conflict management. The next course will be offered for new members at the end of January.

Knowledge about how to analyze conflict, manage emotions and use effective dispute resolution tools can help all of us. We spend so much of our time at work and yet most of us don't have enough strategies to effectively resolve conflicts. MVMP is honored to be able to offer some assistance for community members. It is our hope that our efforts will help to make Martha's Vineyard a happier more productive place—a place where our work lives can be a component of *'living the dream.'*

Sara Barnes,  
President and Lead Mediator

Visit our website

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## FOR MEDIATORS AND APPRENTICES

**Mediator Saturdays:** Roster mediators, apprentices & trainees. Third Saturday monthly 10:00 am Dukes County Conference Room. Next session Saturday November 16.

**Small Claims Dates:** November 13 & December 11.  
January 8, 22 & February 12, 2020.



## GIVING TUESDAY

Nancy Grundman, Program Coordinator

Giving Tuesday occurs the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. This year it falls on December

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING NEUTRAL

Sara Barnes, Lead Mediator

Recently a divorce mediation session got sidetracked. We were in the middle of talking about a substantive aspect of dividing assets and liabilities—this is often the most time-consuming part of a divorce. One word seemed to cause the energy in the room to change. To me it seemed like we were now in the flashback part of the movie when the backstory starts to be revealed.

3. It is a day to say thank you to the non-profit organizations that make our community better. At MVMP, we are a tiny non-profit organization doing big things for the Island Community and we have been hard at work expanding our services. Our sliding fee scale means we turn no one away for inability to pay.

Here's how our community projects have shown meaningful impact:

**Workplace Conflict:** A spring three-part workshop is now being repeated due to additional demand. A weekly workplace conflict management cohort is an additional program for supervisors and managers. All are co-sponsored by the MV Chamber of Commerce.

**Family and Divorce mediation:** These services have grown steadily as we provide Islanders with an affordable, self-determined and collaborative process for healthy separation, divorce and/or parenting planning. Contributions to the Family Fund keeps these services affordable.

**Conflict Coaching:** A new service available through generous support of the Newman's Foundation. Two one-hour sessions of free 1:1 Conflict Coaching are available for any community member.

**Volunteer mediators:** We are present at every Small Claims Court session. As a state-approved Community Mediation Center, court referred cases receive free mediation services.

**Consultative and facilitation services:** Non-profit Boards, governmental entities, organizations and businesses receive individualized support based on their needs for conflict resolution services.

**Conflict Resolution Courses:** These are available to the Community including *Introduction to Mediation* and *Introduction to Conflict Coaching*. Individually tailored programs can be developed.

**Youth Mediation:** Training for youth aged 13-22 is free of charge and participants receive a stipend. The MVMP Youth Program is a partnership with the Aquinnah Cultural Center. Your contributions to the Youth Grant Fund will help to keep this project advancing.

Think of us on Giving Tuesday--or any day. We will make good use of your contributions.

The clients began going back and forth about something that had happened long ago. They were still angry. They were still hurt. They were accusatory and raw toward each other as they kept rolled back through the rocky, painful memories. Sadness. Residual pain. Anger. Bitterness.

Here's the place in the mediation process I tell the trainee mediators to stop looking at the clients, to refrain from the natural tendency to want to know the story. "Watch the mediator." Is my guidance.

As the mediator with this divorcing couple I had to make sure I was providing the clients with the service we promise based on our principles.

Confidential. ✓  
Self-determined. ✓  
Voluntary. ✓  
and Neutral...

Was I staying neutral? I check my thoughts, am I siding with one over the other? I don't think so. How about my body language, could it be misinterpreted? Sit squarely and make sure I look at both equally with compassion. Have any of my biases been triggered? I don't think so, both issues they are articulating seem equally familiar but not pushing any buttons that cause me to veer in the non-neutral direction. This had to be a split-second check-in with myself. Next. What was my role at the moment as the neutral person in the room?

Here's what I did. I watched for about three minutes. They were communicating, however painfully. No one was being bullied—it seemed equally difficult. Once the words started being less energetically lobbed, a natural pause came. Here's what I said slowly and calmly: "This sounds like a potent area for both of you." They nodded, looking tired. "I am not a therapist. As your mediator I can summarize what you both have said to see if this can help us to decide (the topic on the table.)" This seemed to work, and I went on to neutrally summarize what each had said. Checking with each when I put forward their thoughts, removing the incendiary language and using a matter of fact tone. At the end I said, "What did you think of that summary?" More relaxed now, they accepted the summary, and both said they wanted to get back to negotiating.

Neutrality is not simple. As mediators, each situation provides new challenges and food for thought. I think I successfully met the neutrality expectation in this situation—on any day of the week I could fail. We are all human and fallible—that's one reason we usually co-



mediate. When one person drops the ball, however unintentional, the other can pick it up and run with it. We do our best.

It is important to be neutral in mediation. Thanks to our clients for putting their trust in Martha's Vineyard Mediation Program.

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### **Estate Conflict?**

Are you having trouble sorting out an estate or inherited property? MVMP has helped a families to make thoughtful decisions and move forward with fairness and mutual trust. Call us and we will do our best to help.

MV Mediation Program | [mvmediation.org](http://mvmediation.org)  
508 693 2999



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