



May 2020

# MV Mediation Program

## We Can Work it Out!

### MEDIATION MUSINGS



## Learning as We Go: Adjusting to the Present Tense

Sara Barnes, Lead Mediator

- *Oh sorry, my internet is unstable...*
- *If you look down to the left you have to click on the camera. No! with your cursor...*
- *You disappeared there for a minute..Now I see you...oops gone again...*
- *Can you sign out and sign back in, that might help.*
- *EVERYONE MUTE YOURSELVES! I CAN'T HEAR...*

Does any of this sound familiar? Its hard to believe that it's only 7 weeks ago that our organization purchased our first subscription to the video conferencing service.

We have been conducting mediation sessions, meetings, courses and conflict coaching while staring at a screen and hoping for the internet to keep us all connected. And we have managed pretty well, under the circumstances.

***Under the circumstances*** has defined our existence since the shut down. Divorced clients have come back to renegotiate their financial and custody plans, *under the circumstances* they need less childcare and have less money. Conflict coaching clients have reached out to discuss how to handle conflicts within the home *under the circumstances*. Our Youth Mediators, Conflict Resolver and Conflict Coaching courses have been expanded beyond their original schedule because as one high school student said, "We've got nothing better to do, might as well become mediators, *under the circumstances*."

It's not so simple to run an organization this way. "I guess you better mail my check," said one part time employee, "I can't come in to pick it up or leave the house because of my kid who is immune compromised." She is still able to manage the website and deal with many other tasks remotely, that's good, we need her. One mediator has had to postpone taking on any other cases, "With the kids home and my husband working from home, there is honestly no way for me to get a confidential space for two hours, sorry."

Mediation and conflict coaching is not optimal by video conferencing. There is so much learned by being in the same space as another person. On the video, things can go wrong--bad lighting, dropped service, misunderstood language. The medium is flat and tiring to watch for too long.

On the other hand, there are advantages too. The consequent tension that happens in person is calmed, for some, by being on the screen. The mediators can communicate by text throughout the session without distracting the clients. One frustration that may actually improve our verbal communication is that two or more people cannot talk at the same time. So we have to wait until the other person is finished talking. It can't hurt for all of us to learn to slow down our conversational pace and listen until the end of the other person's sentence.

Another advantage is the re-prioritization that everyone is doing because of the public health crisis. Family members who haven't talked civilly in a long while, find themselves joining together in the face of the current events. Businesses seem more willing to make deals with customers who are late with payments. "We are all going through a tough time now, I guess I can wait a little longer." Replying to this the customer says, "I really appreciate that and I'm going to do my best, I don't want to make things worse for you." From the vantage point of this mediator, these conflicts seem to be less tense and more agreeable than in past times.

We are all still swimming in conflict, all the time, but the conflicts have shifted dramatically. At the foundational level the conflict between our human survival and the possibility of illness or worse has brought into the foreground some basic concerns. And swept away less consequential matters. It's heartening to see that many good people are pulling together to make sure that those who are struck hardest are getting the help they need. Our core physiological and safety needs take precedence in a crisis. It's good to see the food bank, the loans and grants, the healthcare workers, the meals on wheels, the cleaners, the store clerks all showing us their resolve--to help others. ***Stay healthy*** is our new way of saying good bye to each other. Sounds like a good plan.

At MVMP our slogan is ***We Can Work it Out***, Would you like to borrow this slogan?

Register for Upcoming Events



## Parent Mediation Program

Parents, it's hard to have the kids all the time. Are you having trouble handling conflict at home? We can provide mediation or conflict coaching through phone or video conference. We have mediators with child development experience and can consider parent - teen mediation sessions based upon your circumstances.

If you need help talking with your spouse or partner, we are part of the Statewide Parent Mediation Program (PMP) providing parents--married, unmarried, divorced or separated--with up to 4 hours of free mediation. MVMP Family and Divorce mediators can provide you with mediation sessions to discuss parenting issues custody schedules, financial decisions, communication or to renegotiate existing plans. Please contact the office to schedule an intake call. We are here to help.

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## Do you need some conflict resolution ideas? Check out our Blog!

During this time where people are staying home and social distancing it's a great time to delve deeper into conflict resolution. We have been putting out a newsletter with great information including links to more materials and suggested activities. Whether to better understand conflict and how you react to conflict or to help with the conflicts that may arise during this time of sheltering-in-place check out our Blog where you can read all of the past newsletters.

[Check out our Blog here.](#)

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## We want to hear from you!

During this time of sheltering-in-place and staying in we want to hear how you are handling conflict. Tell us how you have resolved a conflict during this time.

Email your response to [info@mvmediation.org](mailto:info@mvmediation.org) for the chance to win a mug!

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## MVMP and the Census.

MA is trending 1.1% above the national average in census response rate. But the not so great news is that Duke's County is at only 10% response rate to the rest of the state.

Census gathering is more than how many people are in your household. It seeks to ascertain where funding and other resources can best fit the needs of communities. Now more than ever, we are witnessing first hand how federal, state, county and community

funding affects our vital services on the island.

MV Mediation Program provides services empowering individuals to prevent and resolve conflicts by way of thoughtful and equitable decision making. Census data can be a big factor in determining allocation of funding needed to provide these services.

Help us, help you by taking a few moments to go online to supply important information to meet your needs and those of our community.

[Click here to complete the census today.](#)

If you have questions or would like additional information contact:

Jean Cabonce  
Census Outreach Coordinator  
Martha's Vineyard Commission  
EM: [14citizen@gmail.com](mailto:14citizen@gmail.com)  
Mobile: 508-308-8177

## Our Mission

To serve our community by providing education, outreach, mediation, conflict coaching, facilitation and related services to help prevent and resolve conflicts.

## Our Vision

To create an island of competent, capable and effective conflict resolvers.

[Visit our website](#)

**You can support MVMP with a donation.  
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### FOR MEDIATORS AND APPRENTICES

**Mediator Saturdays:** Suspended due to COVID 19

**Small Claims Dates:** Suspended due to COVID 19

**District Court Coverage:** Suspended due to COVID 19



## MVMP to Waive Mediation and Conflict

# Coaching Fees through June 2020

Nancy Grundman, Program Coordinator

As we all continue to comply with guidance to stay home until the public health crisis has improved, we would like to let you know what is happening with MVMP. We are continuing to provide our Conflict Coaching and Mediation services by conference call or by video conferencing.

We, at MVMP, understand how stressful life is presently,

- some are learning new ways of working remotely and a new way to deal with colleagues,
- some are dealing with new financial realities,
- some are dealing with family issues, and
- some have previously unresolved small claims cases.

In solidarity with the Island Community and in order to do our part, **MVMP will waive its fees** for Conflict Coaching and Mediation Services until the end of June. We are committed to continue to help Islanders. So far we have been able to serve 12 clients through our waived fees period and hope to be able to provide service to many more. We are here to serve our community. As our tag line says, **We Can Work it Out!**

If you would like to make a donation to MVMP please go to [MVmediation.org](http://MVmediation.org) and go to Donate.

## Why I Mediate.

### Mediator Spotlight: Cindy Trish

*I have always been fascinated about the aspect of self determination associated with mediation and was finally able to make attending the mediation program a priority. It feels like there is an endless number of opportunities in our daily lives to handle differences of opinion in a more empowered way. Up-skilling myself is the first step in helping to make this change more broadly.*

## Youth Mediation

# Youth Mediators We will persist!

Sarah Safford,  
Youth Program Coordinator

As we all struggle to figure out ways to stay connected, our latest group of youth

mediators have been hanging in, working hard on the video conferencing platform to practice conflict resolution. So far three of them have successfully complete the 15 hours training and demonstrated their competence in a final mediation role play. This all takes place on video with adult observers from the MVMP Board of Directors present. And it is above and beyond the regular demands of their online school work.

We are extremely proud and congratulate Chloe, Delilah, and Jehoshaphat for their accomplishment and self motivation. They are now qualified to mediate conflicts between their peers and we hope they will choose to stay involved with the program. Several more students will be doing their final role plays in the next two weeks and we expect that they will all be able to finish by the end of May.

This whole group has been remarkably tuned in and dedicated in their participation. Perhaps being online actually facilitates our collective focus. It has made for some interesting dramatic moments and we are all developing patience with the technology problems. We will continue to meet on Mondays and Saturdays at 1:00 until all of those who want to have "graduated". The next project for will be to produce a new training video to use with future youth groups. It will be a challenge to pull this off but with this creative group of young people I'm sure we'll come up with something amazing!



**Thank you for the amazing support of our donors and sponsors  
and to Rockland Trust Foundation, Cape Cod 5, and  
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