

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MEDIATOR PARENT

by Brady Mikusko

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When people discover that I am a mediator, most are shocked and say something like “My goodness! How in the heck can you do that kind of work? You mean, you get right in the middle of two people divorcing and deal with all that anger and hurt?” And I usually agree that it is hard work. But what I don’t say is that there are many days when I’d rather be right in the middle of somebody else’s fight than in the middle of my own.

Take one night last fall, for example. My son, a 14-year old high school student, whose communication style is very different from mine -- he talks in monosyllables and I don’t -- told me that soccer practice was over at 5:15pm and it was my turn to pick up. It was raining that day and, being a non-sports type person, I arrived a little early (5:05pm) because I figured the coach would let them go home early. After all, who wants to play soccer in the rain, I reasoned. So I arrived sans books or bills to work on or anything else to do for that matter...

Twenty-five minutes later, I was fuming. I had dinner to make, a class to attend at 7:00pm and furthermore, does the coach think I have all day to sit around and wait? Doesn’t the coach have a watch? And the internal dialogue got worse and worse.

Finally my son arrived with his friends and I made some caustic remark, to which my son replied, “Don’t make a scene, mom.” Being an adult, I waited to make my scene. Friends driven home, not yet in the driveway of our house, I began my tirade. This tirade was made worse by the fact that my son confessed that practice really wasn’t over until 5:30pm. He had gotten it wrong. He asked me to “let it go” and I

wouldn’t. He reminded me that “it was not the end of the world” but I just went on and on and he left the dinner table hurt and angry, the rest of the family felt horrible, and I left for class late, unrelenting in my position that I was right and justified in my anger.

Three hours later, I began to remember some of what I have learned as a mediator.

Attachment to a position can get you nowhere....

Find out everyone’s need, e.g., I had a need to know the right times for pick up and we could have worked out that issue

Self-righteousness is a lonely place and destroys relationships

The next morning, I was on-duty for the car pool to Pioneer. As I picked up each boy, I sipped my coffee, and watched them through the rear-view mirror. I listened to their early morning banter, and in the early morning hours, on Stadium, an even greater learning emerged. Focusing on the larger picture can sometimes move us out of the conflict. In other words, if I could have remembered how much I simply love my son, how thankful I am that he is in my life, how thankful I am that he is able to play sports, and how very thankful I am that he has good friends, I could have transformed that irritating wait into a moment of fullness.

The end to the story? After my class, I sadly and slowly walked up to his room and told him I had behaved badly and asked him to forgive me. He asked me why I had gone on and on. I didn’t have a good answer. He said he forgave me and I guess I have to believe he did. And after some time, the length of which I won’t reveal, I forgave myself.

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