



## Teaching Conflict Resolution to 4<sup>th</sup> Graders: An Amazing Experience

By Cathy Goldman

The Parent-Teen Mediation Program was asked to teach conflict resolution skills to two 4<sup>th</sup> grade Girl Scout Troops in Bellevue. My first thought was, "I've never worked with this age group. What shall we do?" I put out an e mail request to my teen mediators to see if anyone had interests in working with me on these trainings. Four female teen mediators replied that they would be interested in assisting.

We met to plan the 1½ hour presentation. Many of the teen mediators had younger siblings, so they knew what would most likely work, and what would not work! We decided to take a scenario and act it out three times, modeling different approaches to the conflict. We chose the topic of exclusion. I could relate to that! I immediately remembered being in elementary school and wanting to join a game at recess. I was denied! In PE, when the captains picked their team, I was always one of the last to be called. Yes, this was a good topic to use for our scenario.

At the girl scout training, we acted out this scenario about exclusion where the excluded person responded in three different ways. We then asked the girls to comment on which one worked best. Using "I" messages without blame, threats and name calling took the lead! We then broke into groups of five. The teen mediators asked the girls to share conflicts in their lives, and then we had them play them out. It was a great success. They were so open and honest and loved learning from acting out the conflicts. Here are some comments from some of the teen mediators as well as one of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade girls and a Girl Scout parent.

*Sarah Espinoza* (teen mediator):

I had an amazing time working with the fourth grade girls. At first I thought it would be difficult relat-



ing to them, but the girls really opened up and we resolved a number of their conflicts while simultaneously increasing their confidence levels. We touched on subjects like "I" statements, assertion, inclusion, and different ways to handle any given situation. The girls really began to absorb and put what we gave them to use. In some ways they even spring boarded off our ideas and added their own unique twists that made their points smoother and more believable. The girls also gave us real situations that we role played multiple times switching up roles between them to see how the other ones felt, possible motives, and possible resolutions. Lastly, not only did the girls seem to have fun — we had fun as well. Overall it was a very productive session!

*Kelly Trsek* (teen mediator):

A couple of weeks ago I was given the opportunity to teach cooperation to fourth grade girl scouts. I expected them to be fidgety and somewhat bored with what we were telling them. Their actual response surprised and excited me. They were attentive, understood what we taught and, later in the teaching, they were able to incorporate what they learned into their daily conflicts. These girls were quick to learn and easy to work with. Doing this taught me it is never too early to teach cooperation because despite their young age, kids understand the tactics and importance of cooperation.

*Amandla Khaled* (girl scout)

The girl scout mediation training was a unique experience. We learned different techniques for solving conflicts. It really helped us solve situations that were going on in our lives. We learned how not to hurt others' feelings but just discuss how we feel. We talked about school issues, people talking behind other people's backs and brothers and sisters having problems. We learned to use "I statements" which help us

say what we feel without judging the other person or making them uncomfortable or angry. Also, we learned that you can either be a “giraffe” who calmly states her issue or the “jackal” who yells and judges other people, which triggers their anger. It was cool because we didn’t just learn how to solve problems -- we actually practiced solving problems we already had.

The teenage girls were really great because they really connected with us; it would have been different if they were adults because we would feel like it would be too serious. We acted out each others’ problems. First the person with the problem would say what they felt, then another girl would try to step into the other person’s shoes and say what she felt. Then both would realize, “Oh! That’s how the other person felt!” We learned how to solve our own problems without having to ask others for help and without having to hurt anyone’s feelings. Usually when there is a fight, it is a big deal because we can’t solve it and it just keeps haunting you, and to know that you don’t have to go through that anymore is really great.

*Gayle Khaled* (girl scout parent):

The teen mediators immediately sat on the floor and role played a conflict between children playing Barbie, stopping at intervals to ask the girl scouts for input. This highly skilled group of teens was able to establish immediate rapport with these nine year olds — an excellent model for mediation outreach with younger children. The training was excellent because the nine year olds immediately had the opportunity to apply the skills they had learned. Each girl scout was asked to think of a conflict they had been involved in. The girls jumped at the chance, and became totally absorbed in role playing, because they were learning to solve conflicts that really mattered to them. After each girl had had a turn, they began to talk about an argument that repeatedly came up whenever they played foursquare. The group was pleased when they were asked to role play the situation, and try out a variety of solutions.

The girls left the training with greater confidence, because they felt they had the skills to solve their own problems — problems that were really important in their lives. They also learned to take responsibility for their contribution to the conflict. More importantly, the training helped them to humanize the bully or person they were in conflict with, because they began to understand how the other person felt. Finally, they began to think of themselves as peacemakers; at the end of the training; one girl’s hand shot up, and she said proudly, “I choose to be a giraffe!”

The energy and enthusiasm in the training was astounding! The girls got the concepts quickly and were eager to use their newly acquired skills. I’m convinced that the younger we teach these skills, the better our world will be!

**2008 Basic Mediation Training**

***Our Basic Mediation Training is happening again/  
Tell all your friends and neighbors to register .  
425-452-4091.  
Free. Fun. Educational. Life long skills.  
April 24,26,27 ,May 2,4,5.***

**Volunteer Recognition Party**

The 2008 Volunteer Recognition Night was a huge success! A big thank you to Michelle Stanelun for all her hard work! See the photos from the party below:



Parent/Teen Program Volunteers



Andrew and Travis



Council Member Conrad Lee



Volunteers and friends

## Parent—Teen Update

By  
Cathy Goldman

Last month we were asked to teach conflict resolution skills to 4<sup>th</sup> graders. It was a great experience (you can read more about it in this month's feature article.) I had an awesome training team for this project and want to "thank" Mercy Joyce, Kelly Trsek, Toby Donner, Anna Coyle and Sarah Espinoza for working with me on this training. We had fun planning and implementing the training.



We will meet on March 12<sup>th</sup> to learn about working with interpreters in mediation sessions. Martha Cohen from Superior Court Interpreter Services will present an informative presentation. Please plan to attend!

I have been scheduling "practice mediation sessions" in an effort to keep all new mediators utilizing their skills in preparation for moving into the mediator role. I will be scheduling more sessions in March. I hope you will sign up for a practice session as they have been really helpful!

## BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

**Joint Neighborhood and Parent/Teen In-service:  
Working with Interpreters** — Martha Cohen  
Wed., Mar. 12, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Room 3W-119

### **Trainings:**

**Basic Mediation Training** — Room 3W-119

Thurs., Apr. 24, 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Sat., Apr. 26 & Sun., Apr. 27, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM,

Thurs., May 1, 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Sat., May 3 & Sun., May 4, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

### **Book Group:**

Next book: Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's, *A Human Being Died that Night*. Wednesday, Mar. 19th at 5:30 p.m. Meet at mediation office.

### **Con/Med Consultation Group:**

Join us to discuss your current conciliations/mediations or questions. Great networking and learning opportunity. Open to all volunteers. Wednesday April 16th, at 5:30 p.m. Room 1E-118.

## 10th Annual ABA Section of Dispute Resolution Spring Conference

Join over 1200 mediators, arbitrators, advocates and other ADR professionals for the world's largest dispute resolution conference Apr. 3-5, 2008, Sheraton Seattle Hotel & Towers, Seattle

## Snohomish County Dispute Resolution

Questions? Contact Matt at Snohomish County DRC: 425-339-1335 ext.2325, mphillips@voaww.org, or [www.voaww.org/drc](http://www.voaww.org/drc)

### **Family Mediation Training**

April 11-13 (Everett)

## King County Dispute Resolution

Questions? Contact Jessica at KCDRC: 206-443-9603, ext. 107, [jessicad@kcdrc.org](mailto:jessicad@kcdrc.org), or [www.kcdrc.org/](http://www.kcdrc.org/)

### Mediation Training:

Each day is 8:30am-5:30pm. Fee \$675, lunches provided.  
April 17, 18, 21, 23 & 25

### **Program Staff:**

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>  
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

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*Volunteer Profile:*

**Kelly Trsek**



My name is Kelly Trsek and I attend the International School of Bellevue as a sophomore. I joined the Parent-Teen Mediation Program last summer and have enjoyed it immensely. Through the training and various events since, I have learned many eye opening things of what a mediator can do. I have yet to mediate and can only hope to be as skillful as the mediators in this program already. There is nothing more satisfying than to watch a once troubled family come together again. In addition to mediating, I raise guide dog puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind. Receiving the puppies at two months of age, I love to watch these remarkable dogs grow to be successful guides. Through these two aspects of my life, I realize a person's hard work can truly change another's life, whether it is by rebuilding family members' relationships or giving a blind person more independence. I am extremely thankful to be given the opportunity to help better other people's lives and hope to encourage other teens to do the same.



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