

# A Curriculum in Mediation™



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**Peer Mediator Training Workshop Presenter Notes** - [view page 13](#), [view page 14](#), [view page 15](#), [view page 16](#)

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**15 Looking on Common Ground for *Shared Interests***

**16 Practice Finding the Common Ground of *Shared Interests***

**Need 2 volunteers - parts of Jim & Bill**

**M&M Candy Supply - optional**

MITs in quads with pen/pencils

PLEASE NOTE: The information below **supplements** the specific flow and process directions of the *Student Workbook* pages and is reflective of the theory and practice delineated in the 12 page pdf *Conflict Management* booklet. Therefore, this "teacher's guide" information, the *Student Workbook* information and the *Conflict Management* booklet *work together* for presenters' preparation and should be considered integral to one other. *No document stands on its own from a presenter's preparation viewpoint.* Use the [view page](#) \_\_\_ link above, page by page, to view related *Student Workbook* pages. Download the 12 page pdf *Conflict Management* booklet to your desktop, read it once, and have it ready as reference as you proceed with preparation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

**Hidden Agendas & Shared Interests** <[14mit.pdf](#)> (1.4 MB) [**14 M4**] [view](#). We begin with an observation that we already have ten (10) "little" agreements between our disputants so far. We remark that we are *setting the tone* and the scene for larger agreements in the near future. Double check the journals for story information as depicted in **M3**. We should all have some total of "little agreements" before we proceed. It may be different, but that's OK for now, because each Pat and each Kelly put their own "spin" on things and each mediator hears with a different emphasis. Alert your two MIT volunteers as to when they read their parts (as depicted on **HA**) and then proceed to read the scenario of the Hidden Agenda role-play.

After the volunteers read their short lines, wait a few seconds for the impact of the voices to set in, and then refer MITs back to **M4**, just below, "Pat's part is read . . . and then Kelly's part is read . . ." Discuss the questions following, "Pat & Kelly . . . mediation." Generalization of the hidden agenda concept is now applied to the iPod situation via class discussion questions. With ""stickies", add the new hidden agenda information to each disputant's side of the [poster](#) stating that we have a little more information here. Once the other possible iPod mediation hidden agendas are identified, it's time for more theory. NOTE: What's next is the very *core* (common ground/shared interests) of *any* agreement, so we have to teach it very well. The concept of the Royal Road to Resolution is introduced. Some form of break is worthwhile here, even if it's only to stand and stretch. The bottom of the page is the introduction to **CGT** and then **CGP**, both in-depth looks at shared interests, or common ground.

**Looking on Common Ground for *Shared Interests*** <[15mit.pdf](#)> (244 KB) [**15 CGT**] [view](#). This is a close-up look at shared interests and how the awareness of shared interests helps to create common ground leading to agreement. MITs are reminded how those little agreements that we have been counting play a role in leading us toward our final and comprehensive *Agreement*. Circles of separate interests separated by conflict are slowly brought together in venn diagram fashion by each little agreement (or "miracle moment") during the early steps of mediation. The *negative* shared experience of

having one's parents nag or rag on both Pat and Kelly may be useful common ground (experience). We now apply this idea to one or two (depending upon time) situations in **CGP**. It's good to note that, the better our questions and listening as we dealt with disputant feelings, the more apparent will be our view of common ground. It's this area of shared interests that the veil of anger and conflict hides from the disputants.

**Practice Finding the Common Ground of Shared Interests** <[16mit.pdf](#)> (240 KB) [**16 CGP**] [view](#). As noted just above, disputants are usually "blind" to their shared interests during a conflict. They are in a defensive posture motivated by the scarcity principle in one form or another. We want our MITs who are uninvolved in this conflict to look from above this battlefield where the view is a bit clearer and to help disputants to find the shared interests that are "hidden" from the disputants as a result of their anger. Mediators' feeling-related questions, based on their perspective of things, help disputants to dispel anger appropriately and, thusly, begin to see their shared interests again. They can start to come to the realization that the shared interests are really of paramount interest to the disputants--*more important than continuing the conflict*. This is our goal here. So, in this exercise, the MITs try to find those shared interests in the Mike & Pete and/or Sandy & Karen disputes. Our hidden agenda demonstration shows that even a shared negative experience (both Pat and Kelly being criticized by their parents that morning of the bus incident) can be helpful in the process of healing and re-joining a relationship, or quelling a conflict. They then must state how they can use this information with the other skills they now have (acquired earlier today in training) to move a mediation along. A brief class discussion ensues per the bottom questions under "Class Discussion." Linking miracle moments to [M&Ms](#) (if budget permits) is cool here!

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*A lot going on here as we cover three workbook pages plus use the script on HA.* We now have ten (10) little agreements. One to even mediate at all, eight rules-related items, and one for the disputant-who-spoke-first decision agreement (whew!). Each MIT should have some writing notes in the *initial statement section* of his/her journal AND it should *appear* to be *equal* in content to the casual (namely disputant) observer. Ask them to hold them up for you to see. Disputants seeing this sort of equality are encouraged and trust building is enhanced by this practice. Another reason for each to have these notes is that *we will use the information in the work ahead* and we want MITs to get accustomed to looking at the notes they've taken. While not apparent now, the notes *may* contain a clue or two leading us toward settlement of the dispute.

One presenter picks the two volunteers, *now*, for the upcoming (TRAINING) short role play: Pat \_\_\_\_\_ & Kelly \_\_\_\_\_ if not done so already. Please give them their cue as to when they will speak (see **HA** for brief "script" they will use.)

We return to theory for a bit now. Hopefully, the role play exercise of *initial statement* recording refreshed the MITs' energy and interest. The following *mini* role play *relates* to our problem at hand. Pat and Kelly have **both, in their own way**, (*a possible common ground item for later*) been subjected to pressures by their parents at home before leaving for the school bus stop. In this *mini demo role play* our volunteers read the lines that persons sitting next to them would likely hear prior to Pat and Kelly erupting in violence (e.g., pushing/shoving). **The idea is for MITs to look beyond the words and actions to hidden agendas which, as the term implies, are not readily visible.** From psychology 101 we may recognize the dynamic of *displacement* in the story snippet.

Referring to **M4**, "TRAINING: ROLE PLAY & DISCUSSION - Hidden Agenda", the short introduction to the hidden agenda role play is read aloud by presenters as MITs read along silently. On cue, the *two volunteers read their brief parts, in sequence*. These are the kind of stories which might have been expressed to a supervisor meeting the bus at school that morning following the altercation. The parts played out by our volunteers show, in somewhat archetypal form, a typical dispute between an *articulate intellectual* and *inarticulate non intellectual*. Both have their own "weapons" and can hurt each other in

their *own* way. We, as mediators, need to be alert for the use of weapons by *both*. "Victims" and "victimizers" in conflicts often have their *own set of satisfying strategies and weapons* to get them what they *want* (consciously *and* sub consciously) in life. Both may be fully capable of "attacking" the other in their own way, then. This scenario is "colored" by the parental interaction with *each* that occurred this morning.

**IMPORTANT:** At the conclusion of this activity, place a "sticky" note on the story board near Pat and one near Kelly that has, "Negative Parent Comment" pre-written on each. These will become another *common ground* item, albeit, a negative one. We'll see how even a shared negative experience can be helpful in developing a bond of shared interest in disputants.

It's also information that is "new" to our experience as mediators. If conflict is a "fabric," each bit of information could be the thread that helps unravel (undo) the fabric of this conflict Being alert to, and applying, this idea saves much time for mediators.

The questions printed under the role play section as CLASS DISCUSSION are then posed to the MITs. Why, perhaps, did Pat and Kelly act the way they did on the bus? What was apparent to those around them? We call these *hidden agendas* when *we* are initially surprised by, or do not readily see the reason for somebody's actions or words. Briefly revisit the *graphic of the iPod dispute* at the bottom of **LP** to show how this hidden agenda *may* have developed. Refer again to our video earlier in the day for *hints* of hidden agendas that may have affected those disputants. Mention that we all have complex lives which we carry around, partly below the surface, all of the time. They can often affect our attitudes and behaviors toward others. We don't turn the MITs into amateur psychologists, but we do want them to consider hidden agenda *possibilities*, but without jumping to conclusions. Use *questions* to pursue *suspected* hidden agendas, instead.

At the mid page point of **M4**, "CLASS DISCUSSION," we try to see some more hidden agenda possibilities in the notes we have from *our* story telling/note taking exercise earlier. Well-crafted questions can draw this information out. Three or four are offered as part of this discussion, here. We also are reminded that we have a list of them from **ALP** which may also prove helpful. Point this out to MITs and see if any can be used at this point as we look for those hidden agenda items. Presenters should be certain to point out that *hidden "agenda"* here and *The "Agenda"* in our six step process are **not** one and the same. They *may* be related somehow, of course.

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*Shared interests* (or common ground) is a *critical theory or concept to be mastered*. If MITs need a break, by all means grant it before proceeding. We want to address the importance of shared interests as the Royal Road to Resolution. Separate interests got them into this mess. Shared interests, when brought to disputants' attention, can get them out. Mediators' questioning skills are of paramount importance here. Good questions raise disputants "above" their battle and out of conflict.

Carefully discuss with MITs, the introductory language at the bottom of this page. THIS is often a turning point in mediations. Mediators who can get disputants to begin to focus on shared interests, **after** looking at separate interests via initial statements, or storytelling and **after** discussion of the issues ahead, will experience a high agreement rate. "After" is emphasized because we **MUST** look at separate stuff and hear "needs" first in our process to help drain out its energy. Then we look beyond it to bring shared interests to the fore of the disputant's awareness and how **THEY** can bring peace to their lives.

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Page **CGT** is Common Ground Theory. Common ground = Shared Interests.

The venn diagram from math class will help us in the next two worksheets (**CGT & CGP**). The idea we convey here is to see that *as we increase the number of "little" agreements we increase (awareness of) common ground, or shared interests*. This common ground is where we will "construct" our agreement to this dispute, but we must now *find* that ground and help the disputant to *see* it! We employ a large [poster](#) to help develop this idea.

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Page **CGP** is Common Ground Practice. We put our theory from the last page to work.

In **CGP**, read the story and list possible shared interests in each scenario. *Don't beat it to death*, but *do* the exercise with the MITs in an animated and motivational manner. The goal here in this section is for MITs to be *aware* of all of the potential "floating around" for *identifying shared interests*, and then using them as a *foundation* on which to build an agreement on the common ground. Try these leads:

What do they both *want*?

What do they both *need*?

What *might* mutually benefit them?

What might they agree upon even if it's not directly connected to this dispute?

My "if all else fails" favorite question, to both, and sequentially, is, "Is it true that what you expected did not occur? Invariably, both say, "Yes." That mutual experience of failed expectations *can* be the first substantive common ground of feelings.

Our task then is to *help them to see* things better--to begin to see a *shared* interest in as *many* areas as is possible.

We spoke about getting *above the battleground* earlier in **CMC** and this is an example of a demonstration of the concept. The *shared* interests *help* disputants to decide to *choose again what is really MORE important to them, their similarities, or their differences*. When *disputants can be enabled to see* that it is their *similarities* (common ground of agreement) that lead them to *more* peace of mind than their differences which have led them to discomfort, the dispute often seems to lose its energy and is laid aside in favor of agreement and that peace. Here's the "pay off" for those feeling questions that we've been asking. We are then operating on a *different* "axis" from the continuum depicted in **CMC** earlier. This is *process* and worth the time spent on it. Miracle Moments of mediation - i.e., when shared interests (common ground) take center stage and focus away from the separate interests, the dispute diminishes.

Because this is such a critical concept, we often break out a bag of M & Ms candy (plain, to avoid paramedic visits to allergic individuals) to boost spirits and energy and we often like to say, "Every time we see M&Ms now, we think of *Miracle Moments--the little agreements--*which form the *common ground* of the big agreement and an end to the dispute." A seemingly impossible to solve conflict can be dissolved by a shift in focus by disputants. As we said earlier, we must look at the conflict's elements, first, however and this is what all the storytelling and active listening does for the disputants. A professional mediator we met a while ago routinely brings [M&Ms](#) to his mediations *with adults* to help move things along. We prefer to favor the *symbolism* over the chocolate-candy-physiologically-induced temporary-sugar high, however.

**CGT** shows a gradual increase (visually traveling downward) in shared interests as little agreements mount up. The disputants in real mediations are usually *unaware* of this subtlety. Mediators point out little

agreements along the way to help with disputant awareness, then.

It's all in the mind, because nothing external has changed, yet - *only the decisions of the disputants* - getting them back to that decision maker that they forgot about in their anger - thus the miracle, or in some circles-- the "magic." These are *miracle moments*, then, for the disputants. *More M&Ms anyone?*

Finally, each bit of common ground, or shared interest, is something the disputants can agree upon - *ergo*, each is a "little agreement" that we can *lightly* remark upon, but let's begin *now* to focus on *quality* (content) of our "little agreements" and less on simply the quantity (form). Then **instead** of mediators saying to disputants that we have a *total* of \_\_\_\_ "little" agreements, *mediators would begin to say things like, "It looks like we agree upon \_\_\_\_\_ or you both seem to agree that \_\_\_\_\_" as we focus on points of information rather than simple numbers.* This is a subtle shift to substance in our little agreements ! We have begun to count our little agreements in a *different way* as the **quality** of shared interests (little agreements) comes to the fore.

Ask if there are any questions so far.

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