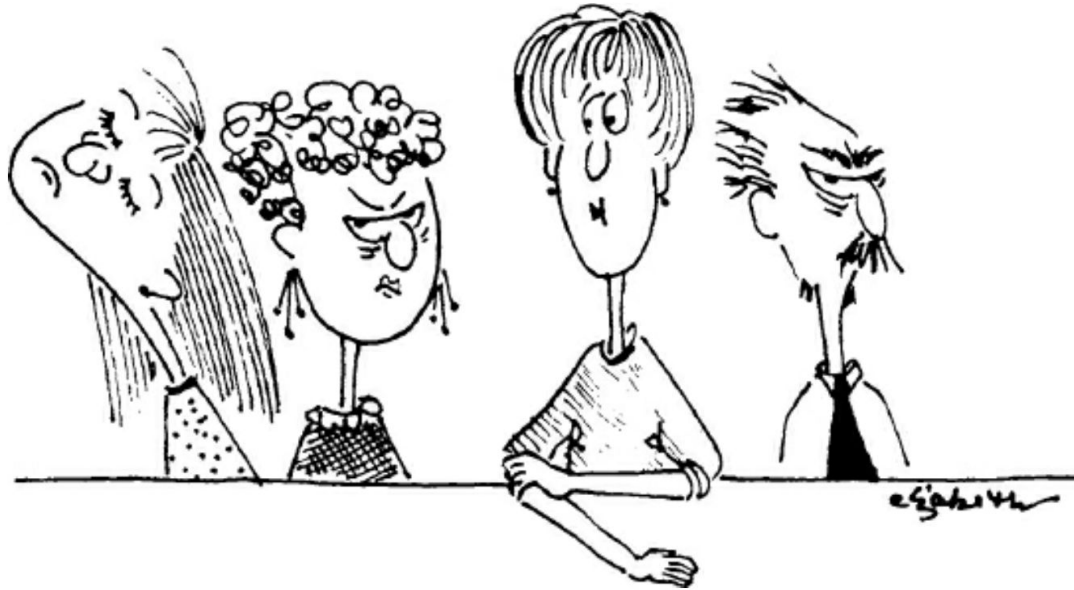


Why and How We Role Play in Training



Why Are We Doing So Much Role Playing?

The short answer is: because it's required by the rules developed by the court system. (briefly review all the different topics for the role plays over all 5 days)

The longer answer is: it's a really helpful way to build skills and confidence for a dynamic process like mediation. Book learning only goes so far. Every mediation is going to be a little different depending on the people and topics, so you can't just memorize how to be a mediator from reading about it or from attending lectures or discussions. You'll need to understand the principals, responsibilities, expectations and limits of your role as a mediator AND you'll also have to learn by doing, first in pretend scenarios in this training and, after the training, by shadowing experienced mediators, and so on.

How Do We Know What To Do in Role Plays?

We will give you a scenario to read and we'll give you verbal instructions (and ask if there are any questions) before each role play.

We intend to break the class into smaller groups in separate breakout rooms on Zoom for role plays.

Each room will (as close as possible) have two (training participant) mediators. We are learning a two-person, co-mediation model as well as a one person mediator model in this training. Each room will also have two (training participant) parties (the people involved in a court case or dispute). Each room will also have a coach, who is an experienced practitioner and/or volunteer to help answer questions and give helpful/constructive feedback.

We'll also usually debrief with the full class at the end of each role play.

How Do We Know What To Do in Role Plays? (cont.)

We intend to break the class into smaller groups in separate breakout rooms on Zoom for role plays.

Each room will usually have two (training participant) mediators. We are learning a two-person, co-mediation model as well as a one person mediator model in this training. Each room will also have two (training participant) parties (the people involved in a court case or dispute). Each room will also usually have a coach, who is an experienced practitioner and/or volunteer, to help answer questions and give helpful/constructive feedback.

We want to give everyone plenty of time mediating, so we'll have participants rotate between being a party and being a mediator.

What is the Role of Coaches in Role Plays?

Coaches, there is a longer list of instructions posted on the materials website for your review/reference.

For the rest of the class, here are some tips for getting the most out of coaches.

We are instructing coaches to turn their audio/video off when participants are actively role playing so as not to interfere/interrupt.

If a mediator or party has a question for the coach, they are welcome to break character and ask them question(s).

Coaches will have a few minutes at the end of the role play to give constructive feedback and discuss different approaches at the end of each role play session.

What if the Role Play Scenario is Unclear to Me or Lacks Seemingly Important Details?

The role plays are intended to be short enough to read fairly quickly, so they are shorter at the expense of providing tons of details.

Mediators often start a mediation with very little information, so not knowing much if anything at the start of a mediation is fairly typical for mediators (in real life and not just these role plays).

Participants are encouraged to make things up about the pretend situation or their character (or the other person or the family) to fill in gaps in the scenarios provided. Go ahead and invent a character and run with it. The goal is to explore and practice rather than to find “the” answer.

What About Breaking Character and Discussing The Scenario in Our Small Group?

It may be helpful from time to time to break character to ask the coach a question or to discuss the scenario as a group. This is OK and can lead to insights about how to approach a situation as a mediator.

It's up to you and your small group how to best use your role playing time.

However, please be respectful of other participants if they want to “do” the role play rather than “discuss” the role play. This is a unique opportunity for participants to practice these skills in a safe (pretend) environment with feedback readily available.