



## Letters from the Alternative Dispute Resolution Conference

### *A Cross-Cultural Study of International Nuclear Negotiations*

By Henry Smilowicz



One of my favorite sessions at the ADR Conference, and an unexpected pleasure, was “A Cross-Cultural Study of International Nuclear Negotiations.” It was led by Dr. Singh, a Professor of Law with the ADR Department at Willamette University in Oregon. He was born in India as a Sikh, and studied law in India, Pakistan, and the US. He had a highly evolved sense of the culture and religions in each country. His style was warm and humorous, surprising for this most serious sounding topic.

Dr. Singh’s primary area of study has been in cross-cultural dispute resolution, especially regarding nuclear arms negotiations. In our session, he discussed the Indian, Pakistani, and American cultures, and the underlying religions that are so closely connected with them. One aspect he believes is very important is that the Western cultures, especially in the US, often emphasize the “Individual Mind” (I/me thinking) where his native culture is geared more toward the “Universal Mind” (we/us thinking). He believes that living, and negotiating, with Universal Mind thinking promotes harmony and is the more useful philosophy.

We discussed how cultural differences include not only negotiating styles and the hierarchy of needs, but also personal communication styles. These included the level of eye contact (India and the US are much different), the preferred distance for conversation, and acceptable forms of greeting and acknowledgement. He used an example of how contact with the feet of another person can signal a deep sense of respect in his native culture.

US relations with Pakistan and India took on a deeper sense of importance in 1998 when they joined the ranks of nuclear powers and the US sought to establish treaties with them to control those feared arms. The relatively high volatility between Pakistan and India made this a crucial task. Our negotiations with India were unresolved until 2005, when George Bush signed a treaty with them. It made him a hero in India to this day, a comment that surprised many of us. That was one of many smiles delivered in this delightful session. ☺

### *Why Forgive? What Research Says About the Benefits of Forgiveness*

By Gwen Jones

This enlightening presentation about the healing benefits of forgiveness was given by Darrell Puls, a mediator who teaches conflict management and forgiveness studies at Trinity Theological Seminary. “Why forgive?” is a question that some ask in order to understand what forgiveness is and what benefits it may offer. Others may ask this question dismissively. It seems that many of us fail to understand what forgiveness is or what benefits it might offer. Although there is no universal definition, forgiveness involves a conscious decision to let go of anger, resentment, and guilt.

We have only recently begun to study the benefits of giving and receiving forgiveness. However, research has identified many benefits. A significant benefit to physical health is the lowering of hostility levels which leads to improved lung function, lowered blood pressure, improved cardiovascular health, and strengthening of the immune system. Refusing to forgive has been shown to slow healing, and is directly linked to increased cancer levels. Learning to forgive benefits mental health by increasing self-esteem and hope while lowering levels of anxiety and depression. I was very surprised to learn that forgiveness can also significantly reduce the symptoms of PTSD, which include general rage, anxiety, realistic flashbacks, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide. Relationships benefit greatly from forgiveness, and in fact, Puls emphasized that marriage cannot survive without it.

How is forgiveness helpful in mediation? Puls noted that in most legal cases, apology and forgiveness are not acknowledged because the law is incapable of dealing with the concept of mercy, and instead the focus is placed on monetary compensation. But sometimes clients just want an apology, and an apology may be more valuable to them than money. Puls reported that in his own mediation practice he does not mention the word “forgive.” Instead he asks questions that bring up the possibility of engaging in aspects of the process of forgiveness. As mediators, we can acknowledge apologies and ask questions that may help the beneficial process of forgiveness to occur. ☺

## From Reactive Brain to Reflective Mind

By Travis DesAutels

At the April 2009 Dispute Resolution Conference, one of the sessions that I found especially thought-provoking was “From Reactive Brain to Reflective Mind: A recommended Journey for Clients and Mediators” presented by Stephanie West Allen. She started by explaining how the brain functions in unexpected ways. Although the brain is tremendously complex, the brain is also “lazy, and fuel efficient. It saves energy and is sloppy in its filing system.” So where does that leave us mediators and our clients? As a slave to lazy brains? Perhaps not.

Allen described the ‘Quantum Zeno Effect’ which refers to the fact that the brain gets better at what it practices. “I am a disciple to that which I pay attention.” Allen goes on to explain that the brain is not just a hard-wired system that develops when we are children into something we are stuck with as adults. Recent neuroscientific studies have shown that the neurological pathways our brains use when we think or react are actually changeable, or plastic. Changing these pathways is not an easy process, and requires a shift from normal day-to-day **reactive** thinking into states of **reflective** meta cognition. In other words, in order to best get control of your thoughts, you have to first separate yourself from them, and put yourself in a mindful mental place where you can observe them, and even change them. Allen calls this ‘self-directed neuro plasticity.’

So how can mediators take advantage of these neuroscientific findings? Its not much different from the 3 Rs: Repeat, Reflect, Reframe that we learn in basic training. As mediators, when we allow the parties to repeat and reflect about what is on their minds, part of what we are really doing is allowing them to move past merely reacting to their situations. An important step in moving past the reactive part of the brain is to allow the reactions to be expressed. Once the parties have expressed their reactions, they are in a better place to start the mental shift to a place where they can reflectively look for a solution. Allen stressed how important it is in this process for mediators is set a good mental example for the parties. As mediators, if we can hold steadfastly to a non-reactive, curious, reflective state of mind, then this will rub off on the parties.

Allen’s session was both informative and inspirational. Her knowledge of science mixed with her stress on mindfulness was a thought-provoking combination. You can read more about these ideas at Stephanie West Allen’s web page:

[www.brainsonpurpose.com](http://www.brainsonpurpose.com)



## Brief Report on NWADR Conference

By Silvia Wilson

This is my first time attending this conference and it was quite challenging for me to decide which seminars to attend. It’s useful to have the materials binder in advance and I’m happy to be able to read them after the conference. I enjoyed Ken Cloke’s presentation with many interesting ideas and information. It was exciting that the production of oxytocin is stimulated when one commits acts of generosity. This substance instills trust, increases loyalty, and promotes the “tend and befriend” response. What a great thing it would be to be able to encourage stimulation of oxytocin during a mediation! It would be useful to have a workshop for BNMP on techniques to encourage this during mediations.

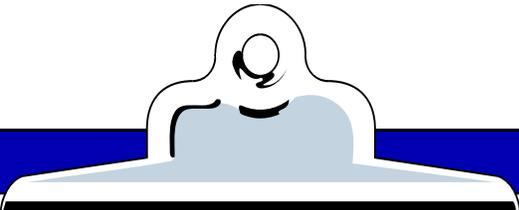
I also found it very interesting to attend Darrell Puls’ presentation on forgiveness. I think it would be interesting for him to give an in-service training on forgiveness for BNMP. “Listening with the eyes – Watching with the Ears” with John Perkins was also an interesting workshop. It might be very helpful to have him give an in-service training for BNMP too. ☺



Congratulations to our Bellevue Volunteer of the Year Finalists, **Henry Smilowicz** and **Joann Bromberg**!

## State Grant for Dispute Resolution Centers Renewed!

It’s official! We have received the fabulous news that the new State budget includes a State Grant for Dispute Resolution Centers and has been signed by the Governor. This means that we have extra funding for another two years! The funds have allowed us to have a Program Assistant and the extra help gives us the opportunity to expand our program services including outreach, marketing, and trainings. Thanks to everyone who helped make this possible!



## Parent—Teen Update

By

The school year is coming to a close! As I reflect back on our program I feel we had a good year! I enjoyed getting to know the new mediators and watching the continuing mediators grow and shine as they mediated cases. We have served many families in our community and have helped them reach understanding and resolution.



We will meet on June 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at Bellevue City Hall to explore cultural conflict between parents and teens. This in-service will be our last one until September so I hope you all can attend. It has been a pleasure for me to work with all of you!

I hope the summer brings you peace and joy and I look forward to another rewarding year!

## **BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators**

### *Parent-Teen In-Service Training:*

#### **Cultural Conflict in Families**

Cathy Goldman and Ilana Vayman  
Wed. June 10th, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-112

### *Neighborhood In-Service Training:*

#### **Landlord/Tenant Rights and Obligations**

Kerry Robinson, Housing Justice Project  
Tues. June 16th, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-120  
6:00 refreshments, 6:30-8:00 program

### *Training:*

#### **Conciliation Training Fall 2009**

Dates: TBD

## **VOLUNTEER NEWS**

*Congratulations to the  
Parent-Teen Mediation Program's  
graduating seniors!*

*We wish you the best as you go off to college!*

Jacob Parikh	University of Washington
Jesse Sieden	Evergreen State College
Katia Nepom	University of Washington
Lian Caspi	Whitman College
Pete Cole	Western Washington University

### **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:*

**Natalie Daniels**



Natalie is a recent transplant from Seattle to Bellevue. She is an attorney, and is excited about the possibilities of incorporating mediation into her legal practice. When she is not doing mediation work for Bellevue or at the King County Dispute Resolution Center, Natalie teaches tax courses at the North Seattle Community College. She and her husband are expecting their first child in July.



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