



# West Hawai'i Mediation Center

## Participant Tips for a Successful Mediation

The mediation process allows disputants to:

- **reduce conflict**
- **make agreements together for how to go forward**
- **build stronger relationships**

**However, the success of a mediation ultimately depends on the parties.** Mediation is a joint effort; with the help of trained mediators, disputing parties can create agreements that resolve conflict. When each person arrives determined to see their conflict in a different way and open to solutions, the better chance that the mediation will be successful.

### Best Ways to Approach a Mediation

#### Arrive at Your Mediation Respectfully, on Time, With an Open Mind

Having a fixed idea of exactly what you want the outcome to be can be a trap that keeps you from entering into the mediation process with a solutions-oriented mindset.

#### Use "I statements."

Rather than saying, "You didn't respect my effort" (which is accusatory and would cause a defensive reaction), say, "I felt like my work wasn't appreciated." "I statements" allow you to express your feelings without placing blame.

#### Understand Other's Points of View

Consider: **How does the other person feel about the dispute? How would s/he define the problem(s) that need to be resolved? How has my behavior in the dispute affected her/him? What are the most important issues to her/him?** Listen to the other party without dismissing, discounting, or interpreting. Listening to their position may reveal important information. Be careful not to place motives to the other's behavior; creating negative narratives to the other person's actions gets in the way of seeing reality. Avoid making judgements or blaming.

#### Agree to Make Changes Yourself

The other party is more likely to do things you would like if you agree to do things differently yourself.

#### Manage Your Anger and Fear

Express anger carefully. Avoid leaving the other person feeling threatened and upset. If the other person expresses anger in the mediation, listen. Don't respond defensively or strike back. Allow the party to let off steam without getting defensive. Do not interrupt. Remember that what is expressed as anger is often actually fear. Try to understand what is going on behind the anger instead of reacting to it. **Focus on the issue, not the person.**

## Acknowledge Your Responsibility For Your Part in the Conflict

If you can do so sincerely, apologize. For example, say, "I can see how my behavior caused you distress. I'm sorry."

## Show Appreciation for Offers of Compromise by the other Party

When someone genuinely addresses your concerns, express gratitude (e.g., "I appreciate your agreeing to give me more time"). If the other person suggests that they would like you to do something that you are willing to do, **offer to do it!** This builds trust because it may be seen as a demonstration of respect and good faith.

## Show Respect for the Dignity of the Other Person

Do this even if you feel angry or mistrustful, and believe that the entire problem is her/his fault. Everyone deserves to be acknowledged for their humanity.

## Think Before You Speak

People may say, "I was just being honest" to justify saying insulting and hurtful things that do more damage than good. A tactful approach will help you get cooperation. Here are some examples:

Instead of:	Try:
using insults: "He never tells the truth."	I-statements: "I can't trust what he is saying."
negative labels on behavior: "He has been harassing me."	I-statements: "I'm feeling stressed by his accusatory texts."
extreme statements: "She is <i>always</i> late."	"She is late sometimes so I'm not sure she'll be on time."
minimizing someone's feelings: "It was not <i>that</i> bad."	I-statements: "I didn't know you felt so strongly about it."
misrepresenting or omitting facts	using factual details, without exaggeration
demanding that the other party apologize or admit to wrongdoing	be accountable for your own behavior and acknowledge mistakes or wrongdoing on your own part
making threats: "I'm taking you to court!"	"I'm hoping that we avoid going to court."

**Be prepared to do the work of resolving your conflict;** your mediator(s) will be there to guide you along the process, but you need to do the work for your best outcome. We hope you'll find this process provides you with excellent outcomes for difficulties you're experiencing. Mahalo!