



Article published on May 18th 2012 | [Ethics](#)

Conflict is different for everyone, especially when coming from a different culture. What constitutes a conflict in one culture may be a lively and healthy debate in another. What is an assertive and healthy expression of desire in one culture may deeply offensive and cause pain and escalation somewhere else. So, what is this Intercultural Conflict ? It can be overt; with two parties in active disagreement, showing emotions, a difference in power levels and asserting their feelings of injustice. Alternatively, it can be covert; evidenced by passive displays of withdrawal, subtle exclusion and polite non-cooperation.

What are the qualities of a good mediator?

They are open by nature, an accomplished active listener who can decode communication to identify the unread emotional needs of the parties involved; for security, variety, meaning, connection, growth and contribution. They will be an advanced communicator able to synthesize, paraphrase and reframe as they dissect messages and undercover the constituent parts of communication; content, plea/command/request, relationship and self-revelation.

Useful is knowledge of the commercial world, how communities operate and prosper and how various relationships can be made to function successfully. Finally, a good mediator will possess a healthy understanding of their own triggers, blind spots and irritating habits. A centered mediator will have learnt to accept themselves as they are and as they are not, will have built up their patience in dealing with difficult people and will be interested in creating new and lasting solutions that bring value and peace to quarreling parties.

The mistakes and misunderstandings must be reversed. The participants must learn to respect difference, to acknowledge its continued presence and to begin to think of ideas for constructive resolution. This requires heightened self-awareness of the individual's own triggers, a recognition and acceptance of the valid position of other people and a growing desire to participate in problem solving and decision making.

The mediator watches for signs of change. It may be in the words that the parties use, the position of their bodies, their tone of voice and the new vision they are creating for the future or a change in tension, power or personal style. Successful resolution comes from interrupting patterns, changing habits and expanding horizons and possibilities. It is an optimistic and constructive process that challenges the false thinking of participants. The mediator's job begins to come to a close when the parties have recognized and reconcile their differences and have agreed to discontinue hostilities.

Going further it is possible to create much better outcomes by trading further and creating synergies and greater value-added solutions by reframing difference as an opportunity. As Meredith Belbin said, "No person is perfect, but a team can be!"

What is to be learnt by the mediator?

Solving one problem is satisfying but it may not help you solve all problems. The mediator accumulates experience that includes successes and failures (reframed as accelerated hot learning!) They hone their personal skills, detach, transcend their irritations and sublimate their own agendas, becoming adept at mining into communication to find the golden truths within.

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Hello, I'm Deborah Swallow and, for the last fifteen years, I've worked in over thirty countries addressing the complexities of people working internationally across multiple cultures . Wider societal trends and new technology are accelerating the need for change making it essential that a [internal communication](#) grasps this opportunity and introduces greater communication diversity.

Article Keywords:

conflict resolution,cross culture conflict,cross-cultural communication , Conflict & Resolution, Cross-Cultural Communication, Cross-Cultural Differences

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