

North Shore Community Mediation, Inc.

Peer Mediation Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the product of North Shore Community Mediation, Inc's (NSCM) annual Peer Mediation Forum. The center would like to extend its appreciation to the four schools from Massachusetts that participated in the 2007 forum and whose students provided the following personal stories. The names of the participating schools shall remain nameless in order to honor the anonymity of the authors and the individuals in their stories.

Peer Mediation Forums provide a means for peer mediators to brush up on their skills and to reflect upon pertinent issues in conflict resolution. This particular Peer Mediation Forum focused on conflict and power. Its keynote speaker was Doug Wilhelm, author of *The Revealers*. Standing at 6'10, Wilhelm 'revealed' his own personal story of being bullied as a young adult with the student mediators. He spoke of the importance of treating others with respect and pointed to several examples of how bullying could result in tragedy such as the events at Columbine High School or Virginia Tech. He then shared two anonymous stories from other youth groups, illustrating both positive and negative uses of power and bullying.

About Guest Speaker Doug Wilhelm

Doug Wilhelm has authored eleven books as of 2007 and has created a Web site especially focused on *The Revealers*, featuring resources for teachers and information for purchases and speaking engagements. Please visit **www.the-revealers.com** for more information.

About North Shore Community Mediation, Inc.

NSCM provides dispute resolution services to the North Shore community. It offers its services to parties of interpersonal, school, community, or business conflicts. NSCM has also been approved by the Trial Court of Massachusetts to provide mediation services to Salem, Peabody, and Gloucester District Courts, the Essex County Juvenile Court and the Essex County Probate & Family Court.

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NSCM hopes that this workbook will serve as a tool for peer mediators and coordinators to better enable them to address school conflicts through their peer mediation program. This booklet asks you to reflect on personal stories from students with accompanying questions.

We have divided the stories and questions into potential scenarios for mediation and into reflections on the use of power and bullying. Have fun with this workbook because there is no right or wrong answer. Just like in mediation, we encourage you to be creative!



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PART 1: THINKING ABOUT YOUR PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM

This first part of the workbook asks you to reflect on your school's peer mediation program and your perspective of peer mediation in general.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What about mediation encourages you to serve as a peer mediator?

2. Do the mediation skills you have studied help you face conflicts in your life? If so, how?

3. How through mediation have you learned to think about conflict differently?

4. What are your goals as a peer mediator for the coming year? (work on challenging skills, develop new skills, etc.)

5. What should be the goals for your school's peer mediation program? (advertising, meetings, etc.)

PART II: THE ROLE OF A MEDIATOR

This part of the workbook asks you to think about being a mediator and to reflect on the challenges you might face in different situations. Take a look at the personal stories below.

A. SUGGESTING MEDIATION:

My friends used their group power against me and they were in fact my best friends at the time. Me and my friend both liked the same boy and he wanted to go out with me. I asked if she would get mad if I did and she said no. So without thinking, I did. She got mad and got our other friends involved and they took her side. They ganged up on me online, yelling at me. They told me I had changed. At lunch, they tried to talk to me but ended up ganging up on me, calling me terrible names. I balled my eyes out in the cafeteria. I lost my friends and they called me names and constantly gave me dirty looks. I was miserable all of 8th grade year. Finally I made new friends and eventually the yelling stopped and the terrible feelings I felt walking into the school every day finally went away. The bashings I received online still affect me in a way but I am much stronger now and have amazing friends.

One day an 8th grade girl came to school with a new haircut. She is a friendly, smiley, pleasant girl with lots of friends. By the way, the haircut was adorable. After awhile in school, a "friend" in the class came to her and told her that another girl had said she looked fat and ugly with her new haircut. The "friend" who told the story had been on the outs with the alleged critic who later heard what been said. The alleged critic went to the girl with the hair cut to tell her side of the story and apologized for any hurt feelings. The "friend" found herself somewhat friendless after this event.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the above two instances of bullying, the conflict resulted in lost friends. Would you suggest mediation to the students involved?

2. Do you think mediation could have prevented the outcomes?

3. How would you explain mediation to a fellow student or teacher?

4. What would you say that would enable them to feel more confident about utilizing mediation services to resolve a conflict?

B. THE MEDIATION SETTING:

One time a boy in my grade hurt me really bad. We were in the middle of science class. See, me and my friends kinda picked on him because he smelt really bad. But all we really did was say, "Go take a shower!" One day he pushed it too far. He excluded me from my friends. He only picked on me. He said, "Why aren't you in jail?" I wondered what he meant. He continued, "You're black, you live in a trailer, you don't belong here! Black people belong in jail, not in school!" I couldn't believe it. I am not black and that means he's racist. Not at me but towards colored people. He stated many things about my life that I did not want others to know. I told the teacher what he said. The teacher IGNORED ME! I had to tell him 3 times before that kid got in trouble. That day in 4th grade was the worst.

Everyone basically sits at the same tables every day but the tables are big and long so lots of different "groups" sit at one table. At the table where I sit there is my group of friends and our other not quite as close friends who "skate and do drugs." I think that these boys are the funniest, nicest, most sensitive guys in our grade but a lot of times all people in my grade see when they look at them is "scary druggies." Then at the table above my table is where a lot of the boys who are the jocks and I guess they are looked at as the popular boys. But I never once heard my friends say "oh, they are just a bunch of stupid jocks" or anything like that about them. And boys will be boys. They like to fool around at lunch and throw food and stuff which is something I see the jocks do all the time. And one day my friends threw some food over to the jock table and they all got so pissed and started yelling at the other boys and one of them yelled in a really angry voice, "oh you f'kn potheads!" and then all of the faces of the boys who threw the food just fell. They just looked so sad I wanted to cry. I wish people would just get to know each other before they made stupid judgments and said awful things to each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Oftentimes stereotypes, name-calling, and assumptions create or aggravate a conflict. How does mediation create an environment that aims to get beyond such roadblocks to conflict resolution?
2. When mediating a conflict, what can you say to the parties to reinforce a safe and positive environment?

D. POWER IMBALANCES:

I moved during the summer when I was going into 6th grade. I only had 1 friend when school started, and it was only because she was new and had no friends either. On the second day of school, a popular girl who had grown up where we lived started picking on me all the time. She would walk behind me and make fun of my clothes and other things. She would call me fat and spread rumors whenever she could also. I didn't understand why she was doing this since I had basically never talked to her before. One night there was a dance and I wanted to go. I prayed to god that she wouldn't be there. When she walked in with her friends, I immediately wanted to leave. I knew something bad was going to happen. She noticed me and immediately I could see that she was saying nasty things about me to her friends. I asked my friend if we could leave, and she said that we should stay and to just ignore her. The girl and her friend started running around and every time she would pass, me, she would hit me over the head as hard as she could and then would run away laughing again. I ended up having to leave the dance because it was just too much. I never really understood why she bullied me so much, but I guess it was just because she knew she could. She was better than me, way more popular, skinnier, prettier and she used it to her advantage. And that is my story of power.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think mediation would work in this instance of conflict?
2. Does it pose a problem that one girl is more popular and therefore possibly more powerful than the story's author?
3. In a mediation, have you experienced a power imbalance between the two parties?



4. What are the ways that you as a mediator could create a balance?

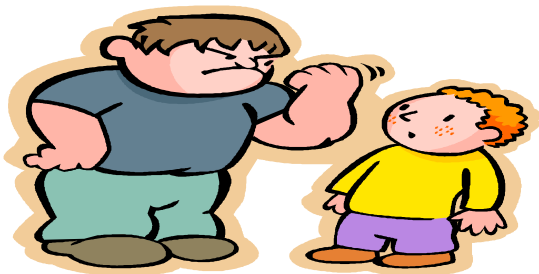
PART III: REFLECTING ON POWER AND BULLYING

This part of the workbook asks you to reflect on your experiences with power and bullying.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you recall times that you acted as a bully, were bullied, and were a bystander to a conflict? What was that moment like? What was racing through your mind? Why did you decide to act as you did? What did you think later that day after the fight ended?
2. How would you describe positive and negative power?
Positive Power:

Negative Power:
3. What examples can you think of when you have used power positively?
4. What examples can you think of when you have used power negatively?
5. What do you consider as some of the consequences of bullying?



C. THINKING ABOUT POSITIVE POWER:

One day our school was coming back from a big school trip. We were all on the boat. Some of us laughing, some crying but its eighth grade so of course there was going to be drama. On our trip this one boy got picked on a lot. He was the second shortest kid, is wicked skinny and he always felt invisible. His dad was a chaperon on the trip. He was also the vice-principal of the high school and kids in our grade weren't his biggest fan. So back to the boat. Okay me and couple friends were having a blast, laughing and joking about how bad the trip was. We decided to go outside and to the top of the boat. It was freezing and raining cats and dogs, but we just grabbed a blanket, all got under it, and we went upstairs. Now we're on the top of the boat and we are running around like we're going crazy. Then we went to the front of the boat. The wind was blowing so hard we could barely keep our eyes open. Then we looked down and there sat this kid from our grade squeezed in a little chair, eyes watering, body shaking, sitting there eating beef jerky. We all felt wicked bad. We all knew about how he got teased and how people were making fun of his dad on the trip. We called his name and tried to get him to come with us, but he didn't. We told him that we wouldn't go inside without him, but he sat there and told us to go. We threatened to get a teacher, but still he sat there and ignored us. So we finally went inside and got our guidance counselor. She went and talked to him. This whole times his father had no clue what was going on. After 10 minutes, he finally came inside, but just sat there with his head in his



shirt, next to his dad. So we called him over and invited him to sit with us. We couldn't stop smiling. We felt like we might have saved his life. No one really got why he was sitting with us but we knew what we did was the right thing, and I'm sure he was happy with us too, especially since he later came and thanked us all.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

The author of this story writes that "we felt like we might have saved his life."

1. How did the students make the decision to use their power positively?

OTHER POSITIVE POWER STORIES...

There's a boy in my class who's short and not very intelligent. Even though he's friendly, most other kids exclude him from groups or make fun of him. One time we were organizing into science groups, and nobody wanted him. It struck me that all my classmates were so willing to exclude such a nice kid just because he's different. Then it struck me that I also was excluding him. I felt so sorry for him. I let him into my group, but to this day he still is excluded.

I remember when I was at lunch my sophomore year of high school. I was with a group of my friends eating lunch when I saw a girl sitting at the table next to me all by herself. I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

This individual at one time felt less powerful because of a learning disability, yet eventually found power within herself and even took the negative power others used towards her and transformed it into an uplifting power to motivate herself.

6. In instances in which you may have been bullied or made fun of, how have you reacted? Do you get upset, angry, laugh it off, or ignore it?
7. How do you take something negative and try to become a stronger person from it?
8. How do your actions say something about you as a person?

HERE IS THE LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, POSITIVE POWER STORY...

In my school there are many different groups of people. Our whole grade was taken to Outward Bound to "bring us together." We all had to do activities that taught us about teamwork, trust and communicating. One challenge was to climb the Alpine Tower. It is a huge wood structure that is hard work to climb. Our groups have to work together to get each person as high as they can go. Lots of people had problems with climbing because it was 60 feet tall and they were scared of heights. Two boys who were best friends and on the same team were going to climb. They both come off as harsh people who have been mixed up and made some bad decisions. One of the boys did not want to climb and he cried and said he couldn't. The other went over and comforted and gave him a hug. He told him, he could do it and the boy decided he would try. A simple action like a hug can help people and give them power to try.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

9. What did you learn from this positive power story?
10. How can you use what you learned in mediation?
11. What can you do in mediation to empower different people?



D. THINKING ABOUT NEGATIVE POWER:

There is this one kid, no real friends. Real short, small. He doesn't always know what to say or how to act "cool" but he tries. Most people generally deal with him and just let him do what he wants but there are a few others. This one person feels like he's better than him and that he doesn't feel the need to respect him. This person calls him names and pushes him away when all he wants is for someone to say hi back. I'm not mean to him and I'm not his friend but still show respect, say hi and be nice.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. Can you think of a time in your life when someone acted better than you? How did you react?

ANOTHER NEGATIVE POWER STORY...

My middle school years were a whole lot different than high school. When you first enter seventh grade you don't really know anyone because we were a combination of 3 different middle schools. Not knowing anyone made it easy for my friends and I to make judgments about people, mostly negative judgments. My group of friends came up with a way of having power of people without them knowing who we actually are. We made online instant messaging attacks. This one particular time was the biggest mistake I ever made. Me and my friend had found a conversation that a girl from our school and a boy from our school had on my friend's computer. The conversation they had was one that should have been kept private but we had an idea to share it with everyone. We had switched up their screen names just enough so people wouldn't know their identities and made copies. The word got out and a lot of people knew but no one found out who had the conversation. But to this day, no one knows we printed it out.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

2. How did the group of friends in this story use their power negatively?
3. How is making unfair judgments an example of negative power?

E. Thinking about By-Standers:

Our school lunch has always been prone to fights, but the one that sticks out in my mind is the soup incident. We were sitting in lunch and there were these two kids who always argue. That day, the older one had enough, took his tomato soup across the room to the others' table, and dumped on his head. The boy just sat there covered head to toe in soup and the other jumped on the table to address the cheering crowd. I didn't like either of them one bit, so naturally I cheered.



DISCUSSION QUESTION:

The author of this story writes "naturally I cheered."

1. Why do you think it felt natural to cheer and therefore support the fight going on?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER PERSONAL STORY...

I don't remember one time that anyone had said a nice word to him, if anyone had ever asked him to sit with them at lunch. He still was always trying, just trying to be like the other guys imitating them by putting people down or making jokes. The laughter that followed those jokes was never complimentary. I can remember one incident that will always stay clear in my head. He was walking down the hall towards a group of boys they were laughing and smiling at the people who walked by except for him, they ignored him. He walked up to them, reached into his pocket, and pulled out one of those pop-rockets that makes a noise when they hit the ground. He threw it down in the middle of the group. A happy smile on his face, he was breaking the rules trying to be cool. They laughed at him, whispering idiot and dumb under their breath. His smile broke. He looked down and was about to walk away when a teacher walked up. "Was that you?" she said, "You're going to have to come with me." He frantically tried to explain while the guys broke into boisterous laughter. They found it hilarious. I didn't know. I shook my head and turned away. When I think back, I know I should have said something, told them how uncool that was, but I wouldn't have risked it. They would tease me—accuse me of liking him. You either hate them or you are them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

This author thought that he should have said something, but he was too afraid to risk it.

2. Why do you think that people are afraid to speak up sometimes?

He says that "you either hate them or you are them," meaning in part that if you do not speak up against bullies you are acting as a part of them or no better.

3. Do you agree? Is silence participation?

TWO MORE BYSTANDER PERSONAL STORIES...

It was during soccer practice. A rather unpopular boy was being picked on. Kids were throwing balls at him and tackling him. The kids didn't mean to hurt the boy and were mostly just "joking" around, but nonetheless it was still bullying. Some people made fun of his background (heritage). Others made fun of how he played soccer and ran. Some people made fun of the way he looked and what he wore too. I stayed out of it for the most part, but still I found myself laughing and cheering. It seemed funny at the time but the boy sure didn't think so. I feel bad about it and try very hard to be nice to this boy. He is still bullied, not seriously or really physically, but still I find it hard to resist joining in although I rarely do. The bullies used their power in a bad way and I hope that I will never become like that. I try to be nice to the boy a lot of the time and I know that one day it could easily be me. The boy never seemed to really mind it, and handled it maturely, so I hope that it stays that way and neither the boy nor anyone else is bullied.

The other day I was sitting with some of my friends and a boy came to sit with us. We all know him and he is a small, awkward boy with very few friends. So he sat down and we were all talking and he wanted to join the conversation, but every time he said something someone would tell him, "Shut up!" Eventually it progressed to them making fun of him non-stop. He would be doing something and someone would try to mess it up or they would make fun of by calling him ugly. The whole time I was saying to myself, "I should tell them to stop," but for some reason I never did. With his face in his arms, I felt horrible. I should have stood up for him. I guess I didn't do anything because although consciously I wanted to help him, subconsciously I didn't want to be picked on for helping a "loser."

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

The two authors above recognize how bullies used their power in a negative way and do not want to be like that, yet still feel pressured to join in.

4. What are some ways to resist this pressure?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER PERSONAL STORY...

There was this kid who lived on a farm and smelled like the barn when he got on the bus. He was a little heavy with close cropped hair as well, and kinda poor. Nobody would let him with them and he would stand there waiting for someone to let him sit.

This happened for days and weeks—and kids would make fun of him, including me behind his back. Cause when nobody else was around I was friends with him. I still feel bad about that.

One day when he got on the bus, I just shoved over and we became good friends and still are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

This author and the author in the story beforehand both try to be nice to the kids being bullied, yet at the same time neither did stand up for the kids?

5. Do you think being nice afterwards makes up for the silence of not trying to stop bullying or not participating?
6. Can you think of an instance when you have acted similarly? Do you still feel bad about it?
7. Why does this behavior sometimes make us uncomfortable?

THE LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, BYSTANDER PERSONAL STORY...

I watched her get made fun of. They said her hair was gross. It's greasy and disgusting they said and I watched them say it to her face. Her face automatically changed into a sad one, but I just stood there. I should have told them to stop, but I didn't want to be the bad guy. They kept saying things about her behind her back, and they knew I was bothered by it. I wanted to tell them how much they were hurting her by telling her she looked like an ugly person, but I was afraid they wouldn't listen. I guess I should have done that in the first place the first time they said something. She used to be my friend, and we even had a band together but I guess she just fell away from me once I followed the bullies.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

This individual lost a friend as a consequence of not standing up and now regrets not having said something.

1. What would you have done in this situation?

PART V: ONE CONFLICT, TWO RESPONSES-WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

This part of the workbook asks you to examine two personal stories with a similar conflict. Although the conflicts were similar, the authors responded in very different ways. Check out the stories below and think about what you would do...

STORY 1: One day in math class two boys were talking to each other. Neither of them is very popular. One of the boys though has a pretty extensive wardrobe. The other one does not. The boy with the good clothes asked the other one if he thought of himself as wealthy. His answer was no. Then he asked if he thought of himself as poor. The boy was joking around and responded yes. The wardrobe boy then said, "Oh, so is that why you wear the same clothes every day?" The other boy got a very sad and offended look on his face. I couldn't see how this one boy could even consider saying something like that. I had to speak up. There was no way anyone could stand by and not defend the boy. I told the other boy that what he said was completely out of line and inappropriate. He didn't seem to care and I said that no one deserved to be talked to that way. The wardrobe boy had nothing to say and it felt good to know I had helped.

STORY 2: One day I was just sitting down in social studies. I was unpacking my stuff and getting ready. My seat was in the third of five rows and the seat right to my left was empty. This boy who has some friends but not the most popular kid in school sat next to me. I talked to him just casual. Then he starts laughing and says "dude, guess what." Then he starts telling me a story about how last block in math he said something to a not so popular kid. The not so popular kid had moved to our school from a private school that year and never really fit in. As I heard this story I looked back to the target sitting two rows back. He looked fine, just sitting there and talking to some people around him. The kid telling the story said he asked the other boy "are you rich?" The boy replied no, so the kid telling the story said "so you're poor." The boy replied "sure, whatever." Then the story teller said "so that's why you wear the same clothes all the time." I just sat there and said whoa. It didn't seem that big to me then because the kid didn't seem hurt. I found out later that a girl yelled at the boy telling the story right after he did it, saying that it was wrong and she didn't care who it was, it doesn't matter. I now realize he was probably more hurt than he seemed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These two authors reflect upon the same instance of bullying; one of which decided to say something and one of which did not.

1. Who do you more identify with of these two authors?

2. Would you be so compelled by your belief that "no one deserved to be talked to that way" to say something? Or would you instead remain silent and not criticize the bully as he retells his actions to you?

PART VI: CONFLICT AT LUNCH

Lunch time can be ripe for conflict. Here are some personal stories that reflect on power and bullying during lunch.



Everyday at lunch, we would divide ourselves into two groups. Although we were all friends, little groups had formed within our big group. Some people remained neutral, and stayed in between the two groups, but other people, like me, were clearly in a separate group. My friends and I started calling one girl "Flirt Alert." She would sit as close as possible to the boys, being obnoxious and giggly. . .in her mind flirting. To us, it was just annoying. I guess I was somewhat jealous that the boys paid so much attention to her, while when I tried to sit near them this same girl would flip out, saying all I wanted to do was be with boys. After awhile, this girl and I became pretty much enemies. I always said mean stuff behind her back and to her face. She always spazzed saying I was so mean, but I knew she did the same exact thing. Eventually, it got tiring being mean to each other all the time and we talked to each other and became friends. But still, this girl always brings up and talks about how I was so mean, making me seem like the mean one when I knew she was just as bad.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. How could mediation have resolved this conflict sooner?

There was this girl at my school and she used to be my pretty good friend. Then this year she got really, really annoying. She also got kind of full of herself and thought that her way was the only right way. Along with all of this, she became really rude. Now when she is trying to get somebody in the hallways, she will shove you to the side and just start yelling down the hallways to other people. So one day at lunch, she asked everybody to move down the table so she could sit and nobody did because whenever we asked her politely to move down, she would refuse. Now, because we didn't move down, she TOTALLY spazzed and ran down to the other side of the table and shoved the chairs aside. She sat at the edge of the table by herself throwing a temper tantrum. I was sitting the closest to her, but I didn't want to say anything to her to make her feel better I just wanted her to know that if she keeps acting like this, then eventually nobody will want to be around her.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

The author chose not to say anything to the girl who was the "bully" in order to show her that no one would tolerate her behavior.

2. Do you think the author's actions would help or harm the conflict?

THE LAST LUNCHTIME PERSONAL STORY...

I walked down to lunch. I was one of the last in line. I got to my table where all of my good friends are. It's the table of popularity and weird people. I only sit there because the kids there like me, except one, the boss. He sits at the very end of the table and every cool kid in rank sits next to him. He was no hot shot. He is round and his parents were recently divorced. I was last in the lunch line so I had to sit with people who had very few friends. I sat there and ate my lunch slowly. The boss made fun of the kid at the other side of the table. He yelled at him, and made dirty jokes about his family. There was a girl, with weird hair, and she was eating Roma Noodles for her lunch. She had very few friends but she was sitting at the girls table. The boss started yelling, "Noodles! Noodles!" He thought it was funny so every one laughed and laughed. I didn't know what he was thinking. He considered her hair the noodles because it was blond, short, and wavy. I did not say anything because the boss says I always ruin things when I try to defend the people that are made fun of. I was really mad at him so I was really nice to her. We sometimes talk about books because she loves reading or we talk about music because we both play violin.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

3. What ways can schools make lunch a more friendly and welcoming place for all students?

Now it's your turn to write a story about your personal experience with positive or negative power. Feel free to share your stories with your fellow mediators or maybe you would like the whole school to participate!!! North Shore Community Mediation, Inc. would also like to hear from you about how you liked this booklet and we encourage you to share your ideas for themes for next years' forum and workbook.

Thank you and happy mediating,

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