

Resolution Reimagined in a Connected World

ACR Virtual Conference Schedule

All times Eastern Daylight Time – Schedule Subject to Change

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **Opening Plenary**

Welcome

Baissou Sissoko, ACR President

Plenary Presentation - You Say You Want a Resolution, Well You Know, We All Wanna Change the World

Lou Gieszl

This plenary session will feature reflections on ACR and the dispute resolution community's many successes over the past 25 years, as well as the numerous opportunities that remain on the horizon for us and for those who will come after us.

Presenter Bio:

Lou Gieszl is Assistant State Court Administrator for Programs at Maryland Judiciary, where he oversees ongoing initiatives to support mediation and conflict resolution, juvenile and family services, problem-solving courts, behavioral health, access to justice, equal justice, online dispute resolution, and policy research for trial and appellate courts statewide. Prior to this, Lou served for 16 years as Deputy Executive Director of the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) a statewide resource for conflict resolution programs and mediator excellence. In establishing MACRO as a state office of dispute resolution, Lou staffed a high-level commission on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) engaging hundreds of Maryland-based stakeholders and a national advisory board of ADR experts to develop and implement a statewide practical action plan. He is a National Center for State Courts Certified Court Executive, with more than twenty-five years of high-level judiciary policy and leadership experience all oriented towards advancing the cause of justice and making court services more accessible and user friendly. In addition, Lou is a long-time adjunct professor at the University of Baltimore's (UB) Program on Negotiations and Conflict Management, where he has taught a variety of dispute resolution courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels, including within UB's Second Chance program which provides undergraduate education within a maximum-security state prison for men. Through the Second Chance program, Lou helped to create Big House Mediations, a prison-based conflict management program by and for incarcerated individuals. A skillful mediator, facilitator, trainer, and conflict manager, Lou is active in mediation at the national and local levels. He is a former president and diversity officer of the Association for Conflict Resolution. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, the world's premier center for the advancement, practice, and study of mediation in the transformative framework. Lou holds bachelor's degrees in English, philosophy, and political science, and a master's degree in public policy, all from UMBC, an Honors University in Maryland.

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm **Break**

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Transforming Conflict with Creativity

Anita Dorczak

This research-based, innovative and engaging presentation will introduce the concept of creativity, the techniques to develop it, and strategies to introduce it in conflict negotiation. It will outline the theories of the creative process while focusing on deepening human connections in the face of rising AI. Through

shared reflections, quizzes and small group discussion the aim is to develop and enhance the creative potential of conflict dispute practitioners.

Presenter Bio:

Dr. Anita Dorczak (M.A., LL.B., Ph.D., Cert. EM, PC, CLP) is a collaborative lawyer and mediator based in Alberta, Canada, with 35 years of experience in conflict resolution. She has shared her insights through workshops and presentations in Europe, Australia, North and South America, inviting others to join in finding creative solutions to conflict resolution. She has also taught Collaborative Law in Spain, Canada, U.S.A, and Poland. Dr. Anita is an active member within numerous professional organizations including GCLC (board member), IACP, CBA, ABA (past co-chair of the ABA Collaborative Law Committee) among others. Outside of work, she enjoys a lively family life shared with a spirited Yorkie, a rebellious millennial, and a grumpy baby boomer. One of them makes her laugh daily.

Beyond Neutral: Reimagining Resolution Through Bias Awareness and Practiced Impartiality

Tisha Taylor

Conflict resolution professionals are often taught to be neutral, but in a connected world shaped by identity, technology, culture, and rapid judgment, neutrality is not enough. This interactive workshop invites participants to reimagine resolution by examining how implicit bias can influence what we notice, who we believe, how we interpret conflict, and how fairness is experienced. Participants will explore the difference between neutrality and practiced impartiality, apply bias-interruption strategies to real conflict scenarios, and reflect on their responsibility to protect process integrity. This session offers practical tools for mediators, facilitators, coaches, educators, and conflict practitioners.

Presenter Bio:

Tisha Tyler, MBA, CPC, is a conflict management practitioner, certified professional mediator, communication educator, facilitator, and founder of Kelton & Key Consulting. Her work focuses on helping individuals, organizations, and communities navigate difficult conversations with greater clarity, fairness, and accountability. Tisha has mediated and facilitated conflict in workplace, community, interpersonal, business-to-consumer, business-to-business, and court-connected settings. She has completed more than 150 hours of mediation work and is certified in the Inclusive Model of Mediation, a distinction held by a small percentage of Maryland mediators. She also serves on mediation rosters in Charles County and Prince George's County. As an adjunct communication professor at the College of Southern Maryland, Tisha teaches interpersonal and intercultural communication, helping students examine perception, culture, identity, listening, conflict, and communication across

differences. Her teaching and facilitation style combines practical skill-building with reflection, applied scenarios, and honest dialogue. Through Kelton & Key Consulting, Tisha provides conflict management, communication strategy, communication and conflict training, mediation, and dialogue facilitation. Her work is grounded in the belief that conflict resolution professionals must move beyond the assumption of neutrality and practice impartiality with intention, self-awareness, and process integrity.

Reimagining Career Conflict: The SPECS Framework for Navigating Power, Identity, and Connection in a Digital World

Brandi Muñoz

Early-career and emerging professionals are navigating conflict in an increasingly interconnected, high-visibility world. Drawing from my new book, *Who Are Your SPECS? Redefining Career Empowerment for the Future of Work*, this session introduces a research-based framework that helps individuals understand how identity, power, and relational ecosystems shape conflict behaviors and career decision-making. Participants will explore practical strategies for navigating workplace tensions, advocating for themselves, and building supportive networks that strengthen resilience. Through interactive discussion and applied tools, this session reimagines conflict resolution as a connected, community-driven practice.

Presenter Bio:

Dr. Brandi R. Muñoz is an executive coach, organizational development strategist, and conflict-resolution scholar with more than 15 years of experience strengthening leadership capability and employee experience across healthcare, higher education, and global professional-services organizations. She holds a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership & Conflict Resolution, is an ICF-certified Professional Certified Coach (PCC), and has deep expertise in culture activation, inclusive leadership, and professional development for diverse talent. Her new book, *Who Are Your SPECS?,* introduces a research-based career-empowerment framework rooted in the lived experiences of women of color navigating complex workplace dynamics. Dr. Muñoz's work integrates conflict-resolution theory, identity-aware coaching, and practical tools that help individuals navigate power, relationships, and career conflict with clarity and agency. She currently serves as Program Manager for Coaching & Mentoring at Memorial Hermann Health System and maintains a part-time coaching practice focused on leadership development and career advancement. Her teaching, research, and facilitation emphasize psychological safety, community-centered learning, and equitable access to professional growth.

Holding Space: Reflections on How a Restorative Justice Program Model Can Help Address Cycles of Conflict and Strengthen Community Trust

Erin Goudreau, Catherine Gunderson

Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ) is Montana's longest running youth-focused restorative justice organization, working at the intersection of conflict, accountability and harm repair since 1998. This interactive panel presentation will share lessons learned during CRYJ's 2-year JAMS grant project: **Fostering Community-Wide Conflict Resolution Skills through Individual Investment** that explored how to embed a deeper integration of conflict education education into their teen programming and community engagement activities. The session will explore "what is the secret for success" in targeted conflict prevention and resolution from the perspectives of practitioners, teen participants and community voices.

Presenter Bios:

Erin Goudreau has been with the Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ) since 2020, working in both a direct service and training capacity. She has spent years facilitating CRYJ teens' restorative conferences and development of conflict resolution skills, while also working behind the scenes to shift school discipline practices and provide meaningful accountability opportunities for teens outside the juvenile justice system. She finds that the Program Director role at CRYJ continually allows her to channel her passion for helping translate both the theory and application of restorative practices and conflict resolution to the world outside CRYJ's walls.

Catherine Gunderson has been with the Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ) since 2008, adapting youth and parent programs, facilitating restorative conferencing and building strong community partnerships. As Executive Director since 2019, she continues to be inspired by engaging individuals and organizations in training and on-the-ground support as they develop restorative processes within their own settings - bringing unique perspective to the daily opportunities, challenges and tangible tools at the heart of conflict prevention and resolution.

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm **Break**

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm **90 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Transformative Dialogue as a Trauma-Informed Practice

Erik Cleven, Susan Jordan

Transformative mediation developed as an approach based on clear premises about people's capacity for self-determined choice and ability to connect meaningfully with others, even when faced with adverse circumstances. Transformative practice has now expanded to include dialogue and coaching based on these same principles and has been used in a wide range of contexts including ethno-political conflict, conversations on race and police reform,

organizational conflict and child welfare cases. This workshop will explore the ways that Transformative practice, with its clear focus on participant self-determination, is also trauma informed. The workshop will include case studies and small group discussion.

Presenter Bios:

Erik Cleven is a professor in the Department of Politics at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire, where he teaches courses in international relations and comparative politics and a Fellow and former board member and vice-president of the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation. He has extensive experience with dialogue in post-conflict settings in the Balkans, the Russian Federation, and East Africa, as well as Norway, where he lived for many years. He has offered training in transformative dialogue in Kenya, Jordan, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States. He is the co-editor, with Judith A. Saul, of the book *Transformative Dialogue: Co-Creating Conversations in Communities and Organizations* published in 2025 by Rowman and Littlefield (now Bloomsbury) as part of the ACR Practitioner's Guide Series. In 2026 he joined ACR's Editorial Group working with Bloomsbury Publishing on the ACR Practitioner's Guide Series.

Susan Jordan is Executive Director of Susquehanna Valley Mediation (SVM), a nonprofit community mediation center in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, where she has served for over 12 years. She is a Certified Transformative Mediator and Trainer with the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation. Susan has trained mediators and facilitators across Pennsylvania, the United States, and internationally in transformative mediation, dialogue, restorative practices, and trauma-informed approaches. Her work focuses on supporting constructive responses to conflict across diverse settings, including courts, schools, community organizations, and human services systems. She is a contributor to *Co-Creating Conversations: Transformative Dialogue in Communities and Organizations* (2025), where she writes about work with families in crisis. A collaborative leader, she partners with local, regional and national initiatives to strengthen community-based, trauma-informed approaches to conflict.

Understanding Relationship Patterns to Connect with Intention - Network Pattern Cards

Rebecca Beauregard, Eva Schiffer

During this session, participants will learn how to use Network Pattern Cards with groups on the spectrum of collaboration to conflict. Based on years of mapping stakeholder networks in change processes, Eva Schiffer developed these cards showing distilled connection patterns (like the hub-and-spoke network or the boundary spanner). Knowing these patterns and their distinct risks and benefits helps neutrals, facilitators and conflict parties think and talk about their conflict

dynamics with more discernment and shape their relationships with more intention. They can clarify how they operate, how they want to operate and how changes may reduce friction. Through practical exercises participants will apply the cards to their own experience.

Presenter Bios:

Rebecca Beauregard is a facilitator, mediator, and project manager at Kearns & West, where she works primarily within the space of environmental collaboration, and conflict resolution. She manages Kearns & West's contract with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution and supports complex initiatives that require thoughtful project management, multi-stakeholder coordination, process design, facilitation, mediation, and relational skills. Rebecca helps people and teams make sense of complexity, conflict, and change so they can move forward with greater clarity, connection, and purpose. Her practice is grounded in formal training and education in mediation, intergroup dialogue, nonviolent communication, and experiential adult learning.

Eva Schiffer has more than 15 years of professional experience as facilitator, trainer, qualitative researcher, organizational change facilitator in the public and private sector, Eva focuses on bringing people together to make progress on their most vexing challenges. Based on her understanding that social change is a team sport, she developed the participatory social network facilitation tools Net-Map and Network Pattern Cards to help change makers better understand how to overcome obstacles and develop strong coalitions. Her career in international development has honed her skills in intercultural facilitation, and she passionately strives to create facilitated spaces that work for people

Cinematic Alchemy & Maslow's Matrix: Reimagining Gender Workplace Conflict Resolution Through Global Film and Science

Denisha Shah

This session introduces a pioneering, multidimensional framework called "Cinematic Alchemy" to transform gender workplace disputes. Synthesizing systems theory with humanistic psychology—specifically Maslow's self-realization need and Kaufman's self-transcendence model—this presentation bridges academic research with popular media. Participants will explore how gender conflict is portrayed within leading global ecosystems—Hollywood and Bollywood films—and compare these narratives to real-world experiences of top international executives. Attendees will gain actionable, trauma-informed methodologies to dismantle occupational segregation, reframe struggles for agency and identity, and implement holistic systemic changes that cultivate respect, self-worth, and high-frequency equity across modern organizational cultures.

Presenter Bio:

Dr. Denisha Shah, DO, MPH, PhD is a Multidimensional Global Creative Catalyst bridging the clinical precision of a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine with a Master of Public Health and a PhD in Conflict Analysis. Dr. Shah serves as Board Director for Newsom Educational College (NE College), a groundbreaking higher education institution empowering adults with disabilities. An elite creative asset, she is a winner of 3 Hollywood Talent Awards at the International Model & Talent Association (IMTA), placing 1st in Soap Opera and Top 5 Female Talent of the Year out of 10,000+ global competitors. As a certified workplace mediator and screenwriter, her pioneering research introduces a "Cinematic Alchemy" matrix—triangulating Hollywood and Bollywood film analysis with real-world executive data. Her published work transfigures Maslow's hierarchy by integrating Scott Barry Kaufman's self-transcendence model to resolve gender workplace disputes through systemic identity and dignity transformation. Recipient of an International Service Award from the President of the Cook Islands, Dr. Shah blends Nobel-level science with devotional transcendence, teaching organizational leaders how to move beyond conflict into infinite human potential.

Beyond Right and Wrong: Reimagining Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Understanding

Azure Brown, Karla West

In today's connected world, conflict occurs across cultural, generational, and identity-based differences. Yet many approaches continue to assume shared understanding of communication, respect, authority, and accountability. This interactive session challenges participants to reimagine conflict resolution through a cultural lens to explore how culture influences conflict behaviors, communication, emotional expression, decision-making, concepts of respect, and approaches to repair. Using real-world examples, reflection exercises, and practical scenarios, attendees will examine how misunderstandings often emerge from differing expectations. The session will introduce tools mediators can immediately apply to foster deeper understanding, preserve dignity, and create more culturally responsive pathways to resolution. Participants will leave with practical strategies for recognizing cultural influences in conflict, reducing assumptions, and building stronger connections.

Presenter Bios:

Azure Brown is a mediator, conflict coach, trainer, and peace strategist with more than 20 years of leadership experience in higher education, information governance, and conflict resolution. She serves on both the Board of Directors for the Texas Association of Mediators and Austin Mediators Association and has presented nationally and internationally on conflict management, communication, and organizational leadership. Azure is the creator of Hip Hop Mediation™, a culturally grounded

framework that explores conflict engagement through voice, identity, narrative, and community accountability. She is also a doctoral student in the Community College Leadership Program at Kansas State University, where her work explores student belonging, conflict, and culturally responsive engagement strategies.

Karla F. West has always been a staunch supporter and advocate of peace and respect for all people by actively increasing awareness and celebration of all people. Alternative conflict resolution in the form of mediation and arbitration naturally fits her character and beliefs. In 2016, she completed Basic Mediation training and soon completed Arbitration, Parent Facilitator, and Advanced Family Law Mediation training. However, she continued working full-time in education. In 2020, she began working part-time on the mediation panel for the Texas Department of Insurance. September 2024, she left full-time employment with Harris County Department of Education – Adult Education Division to be self-employed with her business, West Houston Mediation. She has continued to expand the business by becoming a certified Divorce Specialist with National Association of Divorce Specialists (NADS). Karla is a member of ACR and serves on the Board of ACR-Houston and is a member of National Association of Divorce Specialists (NADS). She holds a BS in Human Services Management and a MA in Christian Ministry and conducted her first TED talk June 2026. She is a community activist, Women's Pastor, and member of several organizations promoting peace and civil rights. She is also the proud mother of three adult children and a doting grandmother.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm **Break**

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

From Idea to Publication: Navigating Your Book Journey

Lois Edmund , Cheryl Jamison, Michael Lang

Have you ever dreamed of publishing a book but felt unsure where to start? This workshop introduces the publishing partnership between ACR and Bloomburg Publishing (formerly Rowman & Littlefield), offering a valuable pathway for aspiring authors. Hear from authors who have successfully published through this partnership and gain insights from Bloomburg's Acquisition Editor on what publishing companies look for in potential manuscripts. Participants will also learn practical strategies for outlining ideas, developing a writing plan, and exploring publishing options. Whether you're just beginning or refining your manuscript, this session will provide the tools and guidance to turn your book idea into reality.

Presenter Bios:

Dr. Lois Edmund brings her clinical psychology training and experience to her conflict abatement work. As a mediator, she tends to focus on

childhood abuse and on families dealing with mental illness. She is an Emeritus Professor of Conflict Resolution based at the University of Winnipeg and the Canadian Mennonite University. She is the author of the book, Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies, one of the first books published as part of the ACR/Rowman and Littlefield partnership. She is now mostly retired.

Cheryl L. Jamison, J.D. is a consultant focused on belonging and connectedness. She has held leadership roles in government and non-profits, including serving as a Legislative Director in Congress and Executive Director of the Association for Conflict Resolution. A former analyst for the Missouri House and a decade-long mediator in Maryland, Cheryl now lectures at Tufts University in the DEIJ Leadership Program. She authored Chapter 3 in Beyond Equity and Inclusion in Conflict Resolution (ACR/Rowman & Littlefield).

Michael Lang is a mediator with more than 40 years' experience in the areas of family, workplace, organizational, congregational and public policy disputes. He is a prominent international leader in the field of conflict resolution. He has consulted with and provided conflict management trainings to a range of businesses, government agencies, not-for-profit organizations and university faculties. Michael is the co-founder of the Reflective Practice Institute. He has authored two books under the ACR-Rowman and Littlefield partnership, The Guide to Reflective Practice in Conflict Resolution and The Guide to Reflective Practice in Conflict Resolution, Second Edition.

Insights Into Mediation in New Zealand

Grant Morris

In 2026, the second edition of my comprehensive book "Mediation in New Zealand" was published (Thomson Reuters). Eight years after the first edition, much has changed in New Zealand's mediation landscape, including the greater integration of tikanga Māori into practice, the significant impact of online dispute resolution and AI on mediation provision, and important changes in New Zealand's three largest mediation areas; commercial, family and employment. My talk will analyze, update, and critique the nature of mediation in New Zealand and provide attendees with insights into a fascinating, albeit little known, mediation jurisdiction.

Presenter Bio:

Dr Grant Morris is Associate Professor of Law at Victoria University of Wellington, NZ. Grant is an accredited mediator and has worked as a facilitator and negotiator over the past two decades. Dr Morris's research areas include mediation, interest-based negotiation and New Zealand legal history. He has published several books and numerous articles on these subjects, including the recent work, Mediation in New Zealand (2nd

ed, Thomson Reuters). Dr Morris leads the ongoing New Zealand Commercial Mediation Study.

From Reaction to Resolution: Transforming Conflict Culture Through Education, Training and Connection

Jennifer Humbler, Joyce Kauffman

As awareness of the importance of conflict resolution grows, many school systems and nonprofit organizations are recognizing the need to more intentionally normalize proactive conversations about preventing conflict and the importance of reconciliation. This session shares some ways in which targeted grant funding has been leveraged to reimagine conflict resolution across the educational continuum—from school-age children to administrators and educators serving on Behavior Threat Assessment Teams. Grounded in the belief that sustainable cultural change requires early skill-building and systemic reinforcement, this work integrates age-appropriate conflict resolution training for students with advanced, role-specific training for educators, administrators, and multidisciplinary teams.

Presenter Bios:

Dr. Jennifer Fields Humber is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Conflict Resolution at The University of Alabama (UA). She earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from UA and brings more than 20 years of experience in advising, education, and academic leadership. Dr. Humber's teaching and scholarship focus on conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, negotiation, and student engagement in online learning. She is the author of *In Their Own Words: Student Engagement as Defined by Online Learners* (Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice) and co-author of *Beyond Compromise: Cultivating Principled Negotiation Skills* (2025) and *Advancing Rural School Safety: A Community-Engaged Model for Behavior Threat Assessment* (Journal of School Health). Her work bridges theory and practice, emphasizing reflective learning, communication, and relationship-centered problem solving. A certified mediator and award-winning educator, Dr. Humber frequently facilitates workshops and presentations for higher education professionals and community organizations. She currently serves on a multidisciplinary grant team administering BAMA-STOP, a $1.2 million U.S. Department of Justice–funded initiative focused on preventing school violence and improving school climate in rural and underserved West Alabama communities through collaborative, evidence-based education and training.

Dr. Joyce P. Kaufman is Director of Preventing Youth Violence Program at the Institute of World Affairs (IWA) and Professor Emerita of Political Science at Whittier College in California. Her teaching focused on international relations and U.S. foreign policy. Her research has centered on two primary areas: the use of simulation, particularly computer-assisted

simulation, in teaching and learning, and international security. She was guest editor of a 1998 special issue of International Negotiation on simulation, received a NATO Research Fellowship for work on the former Yugoslavia, and authored *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia: Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). More recently, Dr. Kaufman's research examines the impact of war on women and women's roles in conflict and peacebuilding. With Kristen Williams, she has coauthored or edited several influential books, including *Women and War* (2010), *Women at War, Women Building Peace* (2013), and *Women and Post-Conflict Transformation* (Routledge, 2017). She also authored *Introduction to International Relations* (2018) and *A Concise History of United States Foreign Policy* (6th ed, 2026). At IWA, Dr. Kaufman created the Women, Peace and Security Program and also heads the Preventing Youth Violence Program. In the latter capacity, she oversaw the creation of a program on conflict resolution and reconciliation specifically for elementary school children. That program was implemented in Wards 7 and 8 in Washington, D.C. and is now being piloted as part of a summer program for Boys & Girls Clubs. She holds a PhD from the University of Maryland and BA and MA degrees from New York University.

Resolution Reimagined: Breaking Inherited Communication Patterns to Strengthen Family and Community Connection and Conflict Resolution

Carolyn Alston

Conflict often stems from communication patterns learned long before disputes arise. This virtual presentation explores how inherited family communication behaviors shape conflict in families, workplaces, and communities in today's digitally connected world. Drawing from Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory, organizational communication research, and mediation practice, attendees will learn how emotional reactivity, avoidance, and generational communication habits influence conflict resolution. Participants will gain practical strategies to disrupt unhealthy communication cycles, foster meaningful dialogue, and implement innovative tools that strengthen communication, mediation outcomes, and community relationships.

Presenter Bio:

Carolyn Alston, M.A. is an organizational communication researcher, public speaker, Maryland-trained mediator, and entrepreneur whose work focuses on strengthening communication in families, workplaces, and communities. She holds a Master of Arts in Organizational Communication and brings experience in public affairs, marketing communications, education, and community-centered engagement. Her research explores how inherited communication patterns, family systems, and generational behaviors shape conflict resolution styles and relational dynamics across personal and professional environments. Grounded in Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory and organizational communication scholarship,

Carolyn examines how these patterns influence conflict in today's increasingly connected world. As founder of House of Perry, LLC and creator of Communic8 It, an interactive communication card game, she develops innovative tools that promote intentional dialogue and healthier conflict engagement. Her presentation connects research, mediation practice, and practical communication strategies to help attendees better understand recurring conflict patterns and reimagine resolution approaches for families and communities.

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Becoming the Obvious Choice

Natalie Armstrong Motin

In a connected world, being skilled is no longer enough. Neutrals are often selected before a conversation ever takes place, based on what others have seen, read, or heard about them. This session reframes writing, speaking, social media, podcasting, and video not as self-promotion, but as tools for building familiarity, credibility, and trust over time. Participants will explore how consistent visibility shapes perception, how to share insight without "selling," and how to create content that reflects the way they think and work. Rather than focusing on volume or performance, this session emphasizes clarity, intention, and relationship-building. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to develop a sustainable visibility practice that aligns with their professional identity and attracts the right clients and referrals.

Presenter Bio:

Natalie Armstrong-Motin is the founder of Marketing Resolution, a consultancy dedicated to marketing and practice development for mediators and arbitrators. With more than 30 years of experience, she has worked with thousands of professionals across private practice, firms, organizations, and associations to help them build visible, credible, and sustainable practices. Her work focuses on how neutrals become known and trusted in a connected world. She specializes in helping mediators and arbitrators use writing, speaking, training, social media, podcasting, and video not as self-promotion, but as tools for building familiarity, demonstrating expertise, and strengthening professional relationships over time. Natalie is known for her practical, execution-focused approach. Rather than theory, she provides clear strategies that professionals can immediately apply to increase visibility, attract the right cases, and position themselves effectively with sophisticated audiences, including litigators and referral sources. A frequent international speaker, Natalie has presented to bar associations, professional organizations, and dispute resolution groups worldwide. She is the author of *The Essential Guide to Marketing Your ADR Practice* and regularly publishes content on

marketing and business development for neutrals. Her work is grounded in the belief that consistent, thoughtful visibility allows clients and colleagues to experience how a neutral thinks before they ever meet, transforming first impressions into established trust.

Mediating Truth in the Age of AI: Reimagining Conflict Resolution in a Digitally Fragmented World

Rev. Canon Dr. Joseph Chileakam Ofoegbu

Artificial intelligence and digital platforms are transforming how truth is formed, contested, and resolved, creating new forms of conflict driven by misinformation, algorithmic influence, and emotional escalation. This session introduces a 75-taxonomy framework for digital conflict classification and resolution, which organizes digital conflict into five diagnostic domains, enabling structured analysis and targeted resolution strategies. The presentation shifts conflict resolution from reactive intervention to systems-based diagnostic practice. It equips participants with a practical lens for identifying digital conflict patterns and applying context-sensitive resolution approaches in online and hybrid environments. The session aligns with the ACR 2026 theme by reimagining resolution in a digitally connected world.

Presenter Bio:

Rev. Canon Dr. Joseph Chileakam Ofoegbu is a Digital Criminologist and ordained Anglican minister serving in the Diocese of Evo, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). He holds a Ph.D. in Peace and Security Studies from the University of Port Harcourt and a Master's degree in New Testament Studies from the University of Jos, Plateau State. He also holds international certifications in Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Forensic Investigation, Conflict Management, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Criminology, and Digital Marketing. He serves as Anglican Chaplain of Pamo University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt; Vicar of Redeemers Cross Anglican Church, Calvary Parish, Tap, Port Harcourt; and Coordinator of the Diocese of Evo ICT Youth Empowerment Centre. He is the founder of Divine Digital Tech Academy, a virtual institution focused on building digital capacity at the grassroots level. His work integrates theology, digital criminology, and peacebuilding practice, with a focus on emerging forms of conflict in digitally mediated environments. He is actively engaged in developing frameworks that bridge traditional conflict resolution methods with modern technological realities.

Restorative Mediation for Parent-Teen Conflict: Expanding the Future of Family Conflict Resolution

Libby Jacobson

Family conflict during the teen years is often viewed through a therapeutic lens, with counseling or therapy positioned as the default intervention. Yet mediation, when approached restoratively, offers a powerful complementary pathway that

emphasizes empathy, equity, voice, and relationship repair. This session explores restorative mediation as a trauma-informed, relational process for supporting parents and teens navigating communication breakdowns, conflict escalation, and shifting developmental needs. Participants will learn how restorative principles can be adapted to family conflict, with particular attention to adolescent autonomy, generational power dynamics, and values-based dialogue. Case examples and practical strategies will illustrate how restorative mediation can expand options for families and practitioners alike.

Presenter Bio:

Libby Jacobson, MSW, MA, is a family mediator, conflict coach, therapist, and restorative justice facilitator specializing in parent-teen dynamics, family communication, and collaborative approaches to conflict and relational repair. With graduate training in both Social Work and Conflict Resolution, Libby brings an interdisciplinary lens to family conflict, integrating mediation, therapeutic insight, and restorative practices to support families navigating parenting concerns, adolescent conflict, communication breakdowns, and family transitions. She is grounded in the belief that conflict is a normal part of relationships and that families can benefit from intentional support at any stage of conflict or change. Libby is the founder of From the Heart, a restorative conflict resolution practice based in Denver, where she provides mediation, coaching, and facilitated dialogue for families, organizations, and communities. Her work bridges emotional process and practical conflict resolution to help people navigate difficult conversations with greater clarity, connection, and accountability.

Bringing Forgiveness into the Room

Eileen Barker

Most conflict resolution processes are designed to reach agreement, but agreement alone rarely brings closure. For parties carrying significant blame, resentment, or unresolved pain, a signed settlement can leave the deeper conflict festering. This program explores forgiveness as an important resource and path to lasting resolution— not appropriate in every case or with every party, but transformative when the conditions are right. You will leave with practical frameworks for recognizing when forgiveness is indicated, how to introduce it in mediation or other conflict resolution settings, and how to guide parties toward true peace and healing.

Presenter Bio:

Eileen Barker is a mediator, attorney, and pioneer in bringing forgiveness and healing into conflict resolution. A former litigator with the U.S. Department of Justice and a San Francisco law firm, she has dedicated over 35 years to mediation and 25 years to forgiveness education, coaching, and practitioner training. Through the Forgiveness Training Institute, Eileen trains mediators, lawyers, therapists, judges, and other

professionals to bring forgiveness work into their practice. She has taught internationally, and her work has been brought into diverse settings, including schools, prisons, and court systems. She has also taught at UC Berkeley Law School, UC San Francisco Law School, Creighton University, and JFK University. In 2016, Eileen received the Champion of Forgiveness Award from the Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance, along with Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Her work integrates the rigor of legal training with the depth of forgiveness practice, offering conflict resolution professionals a grounded, research-based approach to healing that goes beyond settlement toward lasting peace.

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm **Break**

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm **Plenary Session**

Panel Discussion – Across Differences and Borders: How We Build Connection

Moderator: Kimberly Horndeski

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm **Break**

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm **90 Minute Workshop Sessions**

The Legacy of Conflict: Multigenerational Influences

Sue Bronson, Linda Fieldstone

Family life creates an intricate web of relationships, with bonds that continue to affect us (and our children) long after we have forgotten them. The web holds the hidden dynamics and entanglements of the family system. The latest dispute may distract us from the family dynamics supporting the conflicts. In this workshop, we will examine the impact of conflict over generations and explore what is handed down consciously and unconsciously to the next generation. Using screening tools to assess the conflict with a systems perspective helps professionals direct interventions to meet the specific needs of individuals and families.

Presenter Bios:

Sue Bronson, LCSW, is co-chair of the ACR Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination, a pioneer in mediation since 1983, and a psychotherapist in private practice for thirty-five years. Ms. Bronson, who is the lead trainer for eldercaring coordinators, taught mediation courses at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for decades and developed an e-learning module for family mediation training with the Supreme Court of Ohio. She served as a committee chair for the ABA Elder Abuse Screening Guidelines for Elder Mediators (2020) and is a past chair of ACR's Family section and Elder Section. Ms. Bronson has authored numerous published articles along with Linda Fieldstone.

Linda Fieldstone, M.Ed. is co-chair of the Association for Conflict Resolution/Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination, and was president of AFCC and its Florida Chapter, secretary of the AFCC Task Force on Parenting Coordination 2005 and recorder of the 2019 Task Force updating guidelines. Linda was Supervisor of Family Court Services of Florida's 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami-Dade, serving families in conflict for 26 years, and on Florida Supreme Court's ADR Rules and Policy Committee for three terms. She has provided research, training, and consultation internationally on issues regarding family conflict and resolution.

The Mindful Mediator: Protecting Your Energy While Guiding Human Transformation

Jen Mitchell Love

Mediators are often trained to manage conflict between others yet are rarely taught how to protect their own energy while holding emotionally charged space day after day. This presentation explores how mindfulness, nervous system awareness, intentional presence, and emotional boundaries can help mediators prevent burnout, remain grounded, and facilitate more conscious, effective conversations. Participants will discover practical tools to regulate emotional intensity and guide clients through conflict with greater compassion and clarity. As mediators learn to care for themselves more intentionally, they become stronger space holders, supporting not only resolution, but meaningful transformation, healing, and growth for the clients they serve.

Presenter Bio:

Jen Mitchell Love is an attorney of 20 years, mediator, transformational coach, and founder of Solace Divorce Mediation. Jen guides individuals through mediation with a focus on emotional safety, intentional communication, mindfulness, and personal transformation. Her work integrates nervous system awareness, conscious facilitation, and healing-centered practices to help clients navigate conflict with greater clarity, dignity, and compassion. She believes mediators have the unique ability to not only facilitate agreements, but also create spaces where people feel seen, heard, and empowered to move forward in healthier ways. Through her speaking, coaching, online programs, and mediation practice, Jen is passionate about helping professionals reimagine conflict as an opportunity for growth, healing, self-awareness, and meaningful human transformation. Her mission is to change the way people experience conflict, divorce, and life transitions, moving from fear and destruction toward peace, authenticity, and conscious evolution.

When Connection Brings Conundrums: Ethical Problems in Mediation

Jennifer Gartlan, McGavock (Mac) Reed, Ken Rosenbaum

A panel will present challenging ethical scenarios for mediators and attorneys, on topics like confidentiality, conflicts of interest, candor, and good faith. The panel will invite session participants to discuss, help spot issues, and craft ways forward.

Presenter Bios:

Jennifer Gartlan is Chief of the ADR Unit at the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. She is an adjunct professor at the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University, teaching negotiation and dispute resolution. Previously, she was the mediation coordinator for the DC Court of Appeals**.**

Mac Reed is the principal of the Reed Law Firm, Centerville & Alexandria, Virginia. He specializes in defense of professional malpractice and ethics complaint cases. He also represents clients pro bono in mediation cases referred from the DC Court of Appeals.

Ken Rosenbaum is a mediator, attorney, and policy consultant specializing in environmental matters. He has served as ethics point person for the ACR EPP section and has been offering mediator ethics presentations for Virginia mediators since 2008. He is a court-certified mediator in Virginia and on the mediation roster of the DC Court of Appeals. He has been described as an "ethics nerd."

Before, During, and After Conflict: Bringing Mediation-Based Thinking to Children and School Communities

Catherine Wilhoit

Conflict resolution is often taught after problems have escalated. This session explores a simplification of mediation-based theory, making its core principles so accessible that a child can understand and use them. Drawing from classroom implementation, Catherine Wilhoit will highlight the power of community-based problem solving and the opportunity to build shared language across children, educators, families, and communities. The session invites participants to consider how these tools can help create more capable, thoughtful, and collaborative problem solvers for generations to come.

Presenter Bio:

Catherine Wilhoit is an attorney, mediator, educator, and founder of Conflict Resolution for Kids, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children, families, educators, and communities build practical conflict resolution and communication skills. Her work is grounded in alternative dispute resolution, mediation theory, classroom implementation, and child-centered education. Catherine has taught Alternative Dispute Resolution

and Arbitration at the Charleston School of Law and serves as an adjunct instructor with the College of Charleston's Office of Professional Development in Education. She has also held leadership roles within South Carolina's dispute resolution community, including serving as Chair of the South Carolina Bar Dispute Resolution Section, and has served on the board of the Lowcountry Mediation Center. Through years of classroom-based programming, Catherine has translated mediation-based principles into accessible tools that help children identify problems, reframe them into goals, generate options, communicate thoughtfully, and evaluate choices. Her work emphasizes the power of community-based problem solving and the importance of giving children and adults a shared language for navigating conflict. Catherine's approach reflects a belief that sophisticated conflict resolution theory can be simplified without losing its value, making it useful across ages, settings, and generations.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm **Break**

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Cyberbullying: Digital Conflicts and the School Zone

Jennifer Finch-Mitchell, Cynthia Morton, Priscilla Prutzman, Darcy Thompson

The Power Up Program addresses the expanding school zone with conflicts that begin in the digital arena. Cyberbullying is ever-changing. Several types of cyberbullying will be defined and discussed. Cyberbullying follows students into the school and the classroom. Cyberbullying may impact their school attendance, influence their academic performance, and affect their self-esteem and social emotional well-being. Join us to discuss practical strategies, solutions, and resources to address this "invisible" threat to students' academic and emotional well-being.

Presenter Bios:

Jennifer Finch Mitchell has been a School Counselor for over 20 years. She is currently an elementary school counselor in a rural community in southeastern Minnesota. Jennifer provides individual and small group counseling and teaches social emotional learning (SEL) classes for the early primary grades. Jennifer has presented on suicide prevention and the early warning signs of mental health issues. She outlines risk factors i.e., bullying, cyberbullying, lack of social connections, lack of problem-solving skills as well as protective factors, i.e., social emotional learning (SEL) programs, a sense of community, and building connectedness within schools. Jennifer is qualified as a Mediator for Civil and Family disputes. She is a Peace Peddlers Consultant and has piloted some of the Peace Peddlers lesson plans on social emotional learning.

Cynthia Morton, Ed.D. has done extensive and excellent work in the field of conflict resolution education (CRE). She has been a school counselor

since 1999. Dr. Morton is an Association for Peer Program Professionals board member, Peace Peddlers, Inc. Director of School Programs and past Rockdale Virtual Campus Learning Support Specialist and Instructor. Dr. Morton has presented extensively on CRE topics and written multiple articles. Dr. Cynthia Morton has received numerous awards and recognition for her work in the field of conflict resolution education.

Priscilla Prutzman is co-founder and Executive Director of Creative Response to Conflict (CRC). She taught Conflict Resolution in Education at SUNY New Paltz and was on the Fulbright Roster for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Priscilla has written many articles and books on mediation, conflict resolution, bias awareness, bullying prevention and intervention and restorative practices. She is co-author of the Peer Mediation Standards of the Association for Conflict Resolution. She is a founding member of ACR and has received many awards including the National Peace Foundation Peacemaker Award, The Peace and Justice Studies Association Peacemaker of the Year Award, the 1st annual William Kreidler award for service to the field of Conflict Resolution, and the Equity and Diversity award from ACR. She is currently working in several New York City schools helping to implement whole school approaches to restorative practices. CRC received a JAMS grant to implement a year long, for-credit conflict resolution education course in a New York City high school. She has an MA from the New School For Social Research.

Darcy Thompson is a retired educator who worked with special education programs in public schools for approximately 30 years. She is a TMCA Credentialed Distinguished Mediator in Texas. Darcy is a member of Texas Association of Mediators and Association for Conflict Resolution Houston (ACRH). She co-created the peer mediation program for ACRH. She is the coordinator of the ACR Houston peer mediation team and the Power Up Program for Peace Peddlers, Inc. Darcy Thompson has made several presentations on conflict resolution topics.

Engaging the Next Generation of Young Mediators in a Connected World

Luka Jacobi-Krohn

This session explores how to engage the participation of young people in the field of mediation, focusing on college students and other early-career individuals. The presenter is a college mediator who conducts court-appointed mediation in Minnesota as a court-appointed neutral. He will discuss the barriers to entry, the lack of opportunities, creating new strategies for building pathways into the profession, and the influx of new young mediators as a key solution to cover the current shortage of qualified mediators, especially in the courts. Participants will examine how their mentorship and institutional partnerships are critical to training and engaging the next generation of mediators. The session will also discuss the benefits of having younger mediators, especially regarding cultural awareness and digital technology.

Presenter Bio:

Luka Jacobi-Krohn is a twenty-year-old mediator in the state of Minnesota, where he is registered with the MN Supreme Court Rule 114 Qualified Neutrals, which allows him to be a court-appointed mediator. He focuses mainly on court-appointed mediations and has done mediations in Harassment Court, Housing Court, Conciliation Court, and community mediation. He is currently pursuing a BA in political science and an MPA from the University of Pennsylvania.

Bend, Don't Break: Accommodating Clients' Needs Without Compromising Neutrality

Laura Hight

This session addresses the changing landscape of client requests for accommodations beyond accessibility and how mediators can provide a balance between welcoming all to the table without losing objectivity or leaning too far toward advocacy. It's no secret that client's expectations are changing, and as community mediators, our services must change to meet the needs of the people we serve, but at what cost? How can practitioners maintain observable neutrality and continue to deliver consistent, high-quality service to a client base that expects a customized experience, on their schedule? This session will discuss common operational and ethical pitfalls on either side of the scale of reasonable professionalism and community expectations to help you know how and when to bend but not break to allow mediation to be accessible and productive for all parties.

Presenter Bio:

Laura Hight is the Executive Director of the Community Mediation Center and a certified family and community mediator. She holds a bachelor's degree in healthcare administration and a master's degree in psychology. Drawing on 18 years of experience in retail and restaurant management before her career as a mediator, she brings practical leadership and conflict resolution skills to her facilitation work with businesses and nonprofit organizations. A lifelong resident of Cowlitz County, Laura values the natural beauty and strong community traditions of Southwest Washington. She lives in Longview with her husband and their five children.

REV-DR: A Bill of Rights and Complaint Process Empowering ADR Parties

Dan Berstein

At the Association of American Law Schools' Dispute Resolution Section's Works in Progress Conference, MH Mediate's Mental Health Safe Project (MH Safe) launched the Rights, Ethics, and Voices in Dispute Resolution (REV-DR) project with a goal of bringing together dispute resolution leaders to empower parties to know their rights and make appropriate complaints when there is

misconduct. Since then, 46.4% of New York Dispute Resolution Centers shared their complaint processes for a public listing and MH Safe has posted a Bill of Rights document tailored to NY court standards to help parties have ways to learn about their rights in dispute resolution and complain effectively when those rights are violated. This session will share the REV-DR project's resources for developing these Bill of Rights documents and complaint processes, inviting more collaborators to help as these interventions spread to more states. It builds on the June Alternatives to the High Cost to Litigation article "Supporting Party Rights by Coming Together to Address Mediator Misconduct," which all participants will receive a copy of in addition to other REV-DR resources.

Presenter Bio:

Dan Berstein, MHS is a mediator living with bipolar disorder. Since 2012, Dan's company MH Mediate has helped professionals, organizations, and government agencies address challenging behaviors without discriminating against people who have mental health conditions. His book, *Mental Health and Conflicts: A Handbook for Empowerment*, was published by the American Bar Association in 2022. After interpersonal struggles and bipolar symptoms led to Dan's termination from the ABA, he launched civility resources to help people navigate distress, tough topics, and obstacles without becoming dysregulated and unprofessional. A new edition of *Mental Health and Conflicts: A Handbook for Empowerment* was published by Mitchell Hamline School of Law's DRI Press in 2026. Dan holds degrees from the Wharton School and the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

Thursday, October 29, 2026

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Beyond Settlement: Conflict Transformation as Leadership for Social Change

Martina Cirbusová

Contemporary conflicts increasingly reflect broader societal tensions, polarization, and systemic complexity. In this context, conflict transformation offers an opportunity to reimagine conflict not as a problem to be solved, but as a catalyst for growth, learning, and social change. This presentation introduces conflict transformation as a leadership framework that supports dialogue, relationship-building, and inclusive processes within communities and organizations. The session will discuss the evolving role of conflict professionals as facilitators of transformation and explore how transformative practices contribute to creating adaptive and resilient societies in an interconnected world.

Presenter Bio:

Martina Cirbusová founded the Municipal Mediation Center of Brno, Czech Republic, where she oversees 20 mediators. She has expanded

that organization beyond its origins in parenting mediation to provide mediation of all types of disputes for the city and dialogue for large groups and inter-agency conflict.

The Power of Goals Statements in Divorce Mediation

Zena Zumeta

Goal setting is an extremely successful technique that is often underused in mediation in general, and especially in family and divorce mediation. This program will examine how goal setting in mediation can help parties to focus on both final goals and interim goals, rather than just on settlement of particular issues. Examples used will be 1) focusing parties on the relationship they would like with their soon to be ex and 2) how they would like to work with their ex for the benefit of the children. The program includes presentation, videos of goal setting in action in family mediation, and group discussion.

Presenter Bio:

Zena Zumeta is internationally known as both a mediator and trainer of mediators. She is president of the Mediation Training & Consultation Institute, Zena Zumeta Mediation Services, and The Collaborative Workplace in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan Law School. Ms. Zumeta is a former board member and president of the Academy of Family Mediators (now merged into ACR), past president of the Michigan Council for Family and Divorce Mediation, and past Regional Vice President of the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution. She is a past member of the Editorial Board of the American Bar Association's Dispute Resolution Magazine. Zena has extensive experience as a trainer, mediator, facilitator and consultant. She has been providing mediation services since 1981. She has taught at Hamline University School of Law and is an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University Caruso School of Law's Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution. Zena is a recipient of the John Haynes Distinguished Mediator Award from the ACR; the Family Mediation Council-Michigan Lifetime Achievement in Mediation Award; the National Education Association/Saturn Corporation Award for Union-Management Collaboration; the State Bar of Michigan ADR Section's Distinguished Service Award; and the Kumba Award from the National Conference on Minorities in ADR.

AI Can't Feel: Why Emotional Intelligence Is the Future of Conflict Resolution

Aasha Thomas

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming communication, legal practice, and professional problem-solving, but AI cannot feel, regulate emotion, build authentic trust, or navigate the human nervous system in conflict. In an increasingly automated world, emotional intelligence is becoming one of the most

valuable skills in dispute resolution. This presentation explores why empathy, emotional attunement, behavioral awareness, and trauma-informed communication remain essential to effective mediation and negotiation. Participants will examine the limitations of AI in emotionally complex disputes while learning practical strategies to strengthen human-centered conflict resolution skills. As technology becomes more advanced, the future of resolution may depend on becoming more deeply human.

Presenter Bio:

Aasha M. Thomas, Esq., MSW, is an attorney, mediator, Guardian ad Litem, and doctoral candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution whose work focuses on the intersection of law, psychology, emotional intelligence, and human-centered conflict resolution. With a professional background spanning legal practice, social work, mediation, and high-conflict family dynamics, her work explores how emotional regulation, behavioral awareness, trauma-informed communication, and relational trust influence conflict engagement and resolution outcomes. Aasha is a Florida Supreme Court certified family mediator and has more than two decades of experience advocating for children and families within court and conflict systems. She is also the founder of Elevate Legal, an initiative focused on integrating emotional intelligence, trauma-informed practice, and human-centered approaches into legal education, dispute resolution, and professional development. Her scholarship and presentations examine emerging issues in mediation ethics, power dynamics, emotional intelligence in legal practice, and the evolving role of human connection in modern dispute resolution systems. As artificial intelligence increasingly reshapes communication and professional interaction, Aasha's work emphasizes the growing importance of emotional intelligence and relational competence as essential skills for the future of conflict resolution.

Dealing with Hidden Conflicts in Mediations and Arbitrations

Lisa Pomerantz

We think of mediations and arbitrations as processes to resolve conflicts between the parties, but, especially when the parties are represented by counsel or other representatives, there may be underlying conflicts between attorneys and clients, between clients, and between the attorneys themselves. This session will discuss what those conflicts might be, how they can arise, and how a mediator might address them.

Presenter Bio:

Lisa Renee Pomerantz graduated from Harvard University and Boston University Law School. After graduation, Lisa clerked for a federal judge. Following a stint as a litigation attorney, she worked for fifteen years as a senior-level in-house counsel for NEC. Since 2003, Lisa has practiced

business and employment law on Long Island. In 2024, she moved to Denver but maintains her New York practice remotely. She mediates and arbitrates commercial, consumer and employment disputes for the American Arbitration Association. She also mediates commercial, employment and personal injury cases in various New York State federal and state courts.

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm **Break**

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm **60 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Exploring How Mediation Work Affects Mediators

Yeju "Chloe" Choi

People often perceive mediation as a stress-free profession—an easy "way out" of the legal field or a relaxed job for retirees. In reality, however, mediation requires intense emotional labor—managing one's emotions and expressions to meet others' expectations, while upholding the unique principles of mediation, such as impartiality, neutrality, and confidentiality. Despite these demands, little is known about occupational stress and wellness in the profession. This session provides a facilitated space to explore work-related stressors, their perceived effects, and ways workers in this profession may adapt over time, with an emphasis on shared role-level experiences rather than individual narratives.

Presenter Bio:

Yeju "Chloe" Choi, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Sociology specializing in Conflict Resolution at John Jay College of Criminal Justice at City University of New York. She completed her doctoral degree in International Conflict Management and a Master's degree in Conflict Management. Her research interest is in organizational conflict, specifically in cross-cultural conflict and communication, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and virtual team management. Her work has been published in academic journals, such as Negotiation Journal, Conflict Resolution Quarterly, International Journal of Conflict Management, and Family Court Review. She has also presented at international, national, and regional-level conferences, such as ACR's annual conference, the Peace and Justice Studies Association annual conference, and the Georgia Sociological Association annual conference. She was a Registered Neutral in the State of Georgia from 2015 to 2022 and served as a Managing Editor and Resources Editor for the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development and as an Editorial Assistant to Conflict Resolution Quarterly. She is currently serving as an Editorial Board Member of Conflict Resolution Quarterly.

Creating a For Credit Conflict Resolution High School Course

Priscilla Prutzman

This session will describe a several year restorative practice program in a New York City high school that resulted in a for-credit year-long elective called Conflict Resolution Leadership and, in year two, a year-long for-credit seminar. This program was partially funded by the JAMS Foundation. The curriculum in both courses will be described. The seminar students led welcoming new students circles, advisory sessions in bullying prevention and intervention, harm circles, detention circles and reentry circles.

Presenter Bio:

Priscilla Prutzman is co-founder and Executive Director of Creative Response to Conflict (CRC). She taught Conflict Resolution in Education at SUNY New Paltz and was on the Fulbright Roster for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Priscilla has written many articles and books on mediation, conflict resolution, bias awareness, bullying prevention and intervention and restorative practices. She is co-author of the Peer Mediation Standards of the Association for Conflict Resolution. She is a founding member of ACR and has received many awards including the National Peace Foundation Peacemaker Award, The Peace and Justice Studies Association Peacemaker of the Year Award, the 1st annual William Kreidler award for service to the field of Conflict Resolution, and the Equity and Diversity award from ACR. She is currently working in several New York City schools helping to implement whole school approaches to restorative practices. CRC received a JAMS grant to implement a year long, for-credit conflict resolution education course in a New York City high school. She has an MA from the New School For Social Research.

Relational Repair at the Speed of Life

Jill Nagle

Conflict often escalates from dysregulated nervous systems and stories about how the other person is wrong. This interactive session explores practical approaches for slowing conversations down so that resolution can happen faster. Participants will learn how nervous system regulation, deep listening, and translating stories into underlying needs can transform difficult interactions. Drawing from Nonviolent Communication, somatic awareness, and emerging conflict-resolution practices, the session will also offer a glimpse into Mendful, a new human-forward, AI-supported platform designed to provide skilled conflict support on demand, in the moments it's needed most.

Presenter Bio:

Jill Nagle is the founder and CEO of Mendful, a human-forward, AI-supported platform being developed to provide on-demand conflict

resolution and relational repair. She is the creator of Mendful's conflict resolution methodology, which integrates Nonviolent Communication, somatic awareness, and communication practices designed to help people move beyond polarization and reconnect across differences. Jill has more than 20 years of experience studying and practicing Nonviolent Communication and conflict resolution, along with more than 15 years in user experience design and content strategy for technology companies. She previously developed a buyer-seller conflict resolution model for eBay and has spent her career exploring how systems, language, and human behavior shape connection and conflict. She is also a multidimensional counselor, trainer, published author, and inventor. Her recent work focuses on the role of nervous system regulation, language, and what she calls somatic and linguistic internal reference in supporting authentic dialogue and relational repair. Through Mendful, Jill is working to make effective conflict support more accessible, immediate, and widely available.

Supporting Families with a Special Needs Child

Mary Ann Hughes

Families raising a child with special needs often face unique challenges during separation, divorce, and other family transitions. This presentation equips mediators and conflict resolution professionals with practical strategies for supporting these families in a child-centered and effective manner. Participants will learn how disabilities, developmental differences, educational needs, therapies, and caregiving demands can influence family dynamics and decision-making. The session will provide tools for asking better questions, identifying key considerations, and promoting collaborative solutions that support the well-being of both the child and family while helping professionals navigate these cases with greater confidence and competence.

Presenter Bio:

Mary Ann Hughes, MBA is the mother of sons on the autism spectrum and founder of Special Family Transitions. She is committed to helping families through the overwhelming complexities of divorce involving children with disabilities. Mary Ann is a Certified Divorce Coach, Certified Special Needs Divorce Coach, Certified Divorce Specialist, Pre-Mediation Divorce Coach, Mosten-Guthrie Disability-Informed Professional, graduate of the LoneStar LEND Leadership Education in Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program and Dr. Manousso's Advanced Family and Divorce Mediation, Parenting Coordinator/Facilitator, and Arbitration trainings. As Co-Director of the Special Needs Chapter of the National Association of Divorce Professionals, member of Texas Association of Mediators and ACR Houston, and in her work in the special needs community, Mary Ann enjoys collaborating with and supporting other professionals. As a leader in the field of Special Needs Divorce, Mary Ann loves sharing her insights on podcasts, virtual and live events,

and through her work directly with families facing family transitions. She has contributed her knowledge in books and magazines, and shares about ways to navigate special needs family challenges as an instructor for the Manousso Advanced Mediation course and the Certified Special Needs Divorce Coaching certification program. She gave a TEDx Talk, “An Autism Mom's Advocacy Journey” to inspire others to find their strength when advocating for loved ones. Mary Ann was recognized in Marquis “Who’s Who in America”. Learn more about Mary Ann Hughes and her resources at https://www.specialfamilytransitions.com/

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm **Break**

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm **90 Minute Workshop Sessions**

Ethical Guidance for Today's Mediators: Reviewing the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators

Sharon Press, Terry Wheeler, Marya Kolman

The Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators have served as ethical guidelines for mediators since 1994 (with revisions in 2005). During the past 30 years, the practice of mediation has evolved, expanded to new practice areas, and become more embedded in our society. As a result, a Joint Committee was formed including representatives from the original drafting organizations: the ABA Dispute Resolution Section, the American Arbitration Association (AAA), and ACR. The Committee is in the process of reviewing comments about the standards and continues to gather input and ideas from as many people in the dispute resolution field as possible. To that end, this session is an opportunity to learn more about how the Model Standards impact our work and share your ideas with members of the Joint Committee and the Advisory Committee and provide feedback and input in the early stages of the review process.

Presenter Bios:

Sharon Press is the Robins Kaplan Distinguished Professor of Litigation Skills and International Dispute Resolution and director of the Dispute Resolution Institute at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. She teaches Mediation and Negotiation (in both online and in-person formats), and a Mediation Clinic. In addition, Press directs the Israel Study Abroad Program: Conflict Resolution from Religious Traditions, coaches the Mediation Representation Team, and serves as the academic advisor to the students who are completing a Certificate in Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. Press was the founding Co-President of Community Mediation Minnesota and is a board member for the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation. She mediates regularly in Conciliation, Housing and Harassment Courts and for the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. Press is the recipient of numerous professional awards, including the Mary Parker Follett Award for Excellence and Innovation in Dispute Resolution presented by the ACR. Prior to joining Mitchell Hamline, Press

served as director of the Florida Dispute Resolution Center where she was responsible for the ADR programs for the Florida state court system. She is a member of the advisory committee that is presently reviewing the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators.

Terry Wheeler is an attorney and mediator at Artz, Dewhirst & Wheeler in Columbus, Ohio. He is an adjunct professor at Capital University Law School and The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. He has served as temporary Mediation Counsel for the Supreme Court of Ohio. Terry started mediating in 1983 and was actively involved in the advancement of the Ohio Uniform Mediation Act and the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators, as well as other state and national initiatives. He is a former president of the board of ACR. He is a member of the committee that is presently reviewing the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators.

Marya Kolman is the Manager of the Dispute Resolution Section of the Supreme Court of Ohio and an adjunct instructor in mediation and dispute resolution at the Moritz College of Law and Capital University Law School. Previously she was the Supervisor of Mediation Services for the Franklin County Ohio Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court and a mediator and attorney in private practice. Marya was a member of the taskforce that updated the Model Standards for Family and Divorce Mediation in 2025, and she is a member of the committee that is presently reviewing the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators. Marya is a current member and past president of ACR's Board of Directors and a member of the Board of Director of the Ohio Chapter of the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts. She holds a law degree from Yale Law School and an undergraduate degree in social work from Penn State.

Holding Space for Resilience: Making Room for Strengths and Shadows

Mary Dumas, Shana Hormann, Vanessa Timmons

We are offering a QA session for participants to explore multiple ways of "Holding Space" in group work. Presenters from the TORCH Collective will share frameworks for "holding space" when uncertainty, trauma, and justice issues arise in individual bodies, in groups, and organizations. Pathways we will explore include:

Holding Space with Equanimity - Somatic practices for inner awareness, situational assessment and group integration for "working with" what is arising.

Holding Space for "Power With" Experiences - Identify individual and team strengths and shadows that impact group dynamics, including harmful practices that arise as the result of organizational trauma.

Holding Space for Healing, Repair, and Transformation - Practice Nervous System First Aid strategies for witnessing to others' experiences. Identify culturally appropriate skills for building resilience in individuals and groups.

Presenter Bios:

Mary Dumas is a mediator, facilitator, and community engagement professional offering services to individuals and organizations. Mary helps leaders and teams translate technical information and regulatory mandates into actionable information and meaningful pathways forward. With more than 40 years in practice, she is known for using a systems approach to co-create resilient teams ready to address historic harms and generate resources that sustain ongoing learning and collaboration. Mary has worked with leaders and agencies at all levels of government, government-to -government engagements, research teams, private and nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions to navigate change in ways that build people, teams, and communities. Her expertise in integrating historical trauma to build organizational resilience, and healing informs her approach to every engagement, writing, and course development.

Shana Hormann, MSW, PhD is an author and consultant, whose practice encompasses leading during organizational trauma, uncovering organizational patterns, addressing family violence, and indigenous leadership. Building on her First Nations Blackfoot-Scottish-Welsh-German heritage, Shana is committed to building resilience strategies that are culturally appropriate with teams, tribes, organizations, and communities. Her co-authored book, *Organizational Trauma and Healing*, provides a framework for healing grounded in experience with hundreds of nonprofit organizations, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, clergy and lay people, and school personnel. Shana is Faculty Emerita from Antioch University's Graduate School of Leadership and Change, and served as faculty for the Muckleshoot Tribal College, the University of Washington School of Social Work, and the University of Alaska Southeast-Juneau.

Vanessa Timmons, CPCC, MMT is a certified professional life coach, master mindfulness meditation teacher, and organizational consultant with more than 40 years of experience supporting individuals and organizations through change, disruption, and trauma. She earned her BA in Multidisciplinary Studies from Marylhurst University in Portland, Oregon, and has continued her education through advanced training and certifications, including the Interpersonal Neurobiology of Trauma Certificate Program at Portland State University. Her work is grounded in a deep commitment to supporting individuals and communities in their liberatory healing and growth. Vanessa's approach to transformative coaching helps people and organizations navigate sudden change and profound transition with greater resilience, awareness, and intention.

She offers expertise in:

• Leadership coaching for individuals navigating personal or professional transitions

• Eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs for individuals and small groups

• Consulting with teams to develop trauma-informed practices that support workplace well-being

Agreement Writing for Mediators: Practical Skills for Durable Outcomes

Sunny Sassaman, Ken Rosenbaum

The written agreement is an important part of mediation. It turns conversation into commitment, clarifies expectations, and helps parties move forward with confidence. Agreement writing involves more than filling in terms—it requires neutrality, clarity, reality testing, ethical awareness, and adaptability across mediation settings. This session builds on the conversations from the Agreement Writing for Mediators Webinar in June 2026. In keeping with the theme of the conference, it will expand on agreement writing for facilitation models, AI, and language that is trauma informed and inclusive.

Presenter Bios:

Sunny Sassaman helps people and organizations transform harmful conflict habits and build practical pathways to resolution through mediation, training, keynote speaking and facilitated dialogue. She is the founder of Common Ground Mediation Services LLC and President of ADR Group NW. Sunny is a former President of ACR and currently resides in Portland, Oregon.

Ken Rosenbaum is a mediator, attorney, and policy consultant specializing in environmental matters. He has served as ethics point person for the ACR EPP section and has been offering mediator ethics presentations for Virginia mediators since 2008. He is a court-certified mediator in Virginia and on the mediation roster of the DC Court of Appeals. He has been described as an "ethics nerd."

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm **Break**

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm **ACR Annual Meeting and Installation of New ACR President**

All attendees welcome