



FY21 Quarter 3

Encouraging Communication Through Mutual Respect ADR also means “A Dialogue Resource”

NM Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Bureau

We are a state Risk Management program that works with state employees and their agencies to access workplace mediation, communication-based training and alternative resources to workplace conflict. Our goal is to provide state employees an early resource to resolve conflicts in the workplace.

Visit our website at:
<https://adr.gsd.state.nm.us>

Contact us at:
adr.bureau@state.nm.us

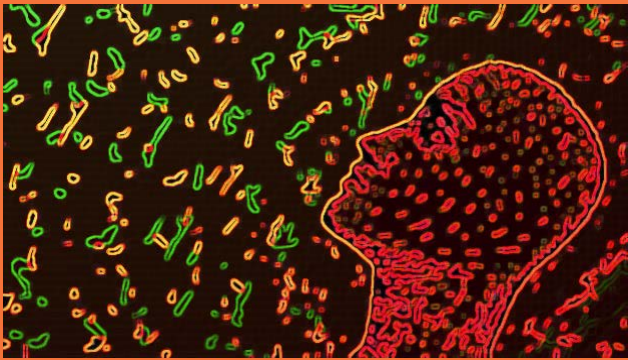
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NEW MEXICO
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT



*“I wonder how many people I’ve looked at all my life and never seen.”
~ John Steinbeck*



The ADR Bureau is now offering online mediation!
[Click here](#) for a recorded Program Overview to learn about the free services we offer state employees.

ADR TRAINING COMING SOON:

Essentials for Effective Communication
3-hour online training (for all state employees)
February 25, 2021 – [click here for details](#)
March 10, 2021 – [click here for details](#)
We will consider and try out a variety of essential skills and techniques designed to help us become more effective communicators.

Coffee Talk with the ADR Bureau
1-hour online roundtable (for ADR Coordinators & our Volunteer Mediators)
February 26, 2021 – [click here for details](#)
Join us in an informal, roundtable conversation about anything and everything ADR-related! Bring your top-of-mind concerns and questions and share your ideas, knowledge and resources.

ADR Coordinator Training
3-hour online training (for ADR Coordinators representing state agencies)
April 14, 2021 – [click here for details](#)
We welcome new ADR Coordinators, as well as those who would like a refresher course. Come and learn about the new ADR services in State Government!

Classes above are FREE for state employees and space is limited.



Why tough conversations are so tough to have – and what to do about it

by Lisa Kohn

I think it’s something we all have in common. There are simply some conversations we don’t want to or don’t know how to have, and so we either avoid the conversations (or the person/people we should be having the conversations with), plunge into the conversations recklessly, or carefully think through exactly what we need to say (and end up watching our words so carefully that we often don’t get our point across).

Perhaps needless to say, none of these approaches are productive.

Many of us hate [conflict](#) or mistakenly believe that effective teams (or relationships) are ones where everyone sees things in the same way and aligns on all issues. This is not only not possible, it’s not true. Effective teams (and relationships) are ones where we’ve realized we often see things differently and we’ve learned how to disagree effectively. In other words, teams (and relationships) need conflict, and therefore, we need to learn how to manage conflict.

We need to learn how to have those [tough conversations](#).

Those tough conversations don’t happen because perhaps we’re afraid we’ll upset the other person or people. Perhaps we’re tired of their “constant pushback,” and we just don’t have the energy to try again. Perhaps we’ve lost respect for the other person or we feel like they don’t listen to us anyway or we can’t handle our own emotional surges and so we back away.

Whatever the reason, again, we need to learn how to have tough conversations. Here are some simple in concept (yet potentially difficult in execution) suggestions on how to do that:

- ***Avoid (or at least calmly call out) potential conversation and relationship destroyers*** – There are four toxic behaviors that are lethal to a conversation or relationship. They have been named “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” by John Gottman, a relationship expert. The toxic behaviors are criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. The bad news is that we all engage in these behaviors at some point. The good news is that there are antidotes and ways around and away from them, especially if all parties in the conversation are willing to be aware of these tendencies and to call them out. You can learn more about the Four Horsemen and the antidotes in this [article](#) by Fernando Lopez.



- ***Notice your own emotional “hi-jacks” and call them out (and find ways to soothe yourself)*** – Tough conversations are tough. We can be easily triggered, and when we’re triggered we’re less

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able to have a rational, productive discussion. We may attack or we may withdraw, but in either case, we're hurting the conversation and the relationship. In an ideal world, we'd be able to smoothly sail through our emotional outbursts and shutdowns, but unfortunately that's not always possible. A next best option is to at least be able to acknowledge we're in overwhelm or shutdown, and that we may need help to remain calm and/or engaged. Another next best option is to know what soothes us – taking [deep breaths](#), taking a five-minute break, taking a brief walk, etc. – and then taking that soothing action, so that we can step back in and be more rational and effective.

- **Find a facilitator** – Sometimes conversations are too tough, or situations are too loaded, to be able to move through them without “outside” help or facilitation. At times we help our clients navigate tough conversations – one-on-one conversations, small team conversations, or entire leadership conversations. Working with a “third-party” who understands the situation and yet who has no agenda other than to help you work through a situation can be an extremely effective way to make a tough conversation a bit less tough to have – and to more likely guarantee a successful outcome.



- **Assume good intentions** – More times than not when we act as a facilitator for clients having these tough conversations, it becomes obvious that both/all parties have the best interest of the organization (team, relationship) in mind and at heart. This often becomes a first stepping-stone toward moving through the conversation productively. We therefore nearly always recommend that our clients check their own “prejudices” around the person/people with whom they're in conflict. Unfortunately, more times than not we find that at least one party to the conversation has assumed less than good intentions of the other party. Just this simple (but not easy) shift in mindset can help shift the conversation and relationship overall.

Tough conversations are challenging to have, but they're necessary, and when handled well, can lead to a stronger, more honest, more vulnerable relationship and to exponentially greater results. With a bit of practice, increased truthfulness, and decreased defensiveness, tough conversations can become a bit easier to have, and, again, greater results can be achieved.

Source: <https://chatsworthconsulting.com/2020/01/30/why-tough-conversations-are-so-tough-to-have-and-what-to-do-about-it/>

Curious about mediation through the ADR Bureau?

Email us at:

adr.bureau@state.nm.us

or visit our website at:

<https://adr.gsd.state.nm.us>