

## THE PULSE RATE

FEBRUARY 2010

## IMPARTIALITY

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Lately I have been thinking about impartiality. I realize that as a mediator that impartiality is easy to define, if not easy to do. One of the main things you have to consider about that impartiality, besides of course managing your own stuff, is who is hiring you, and how that hiring contract affects your relationship to the clients.

However lately in the classroom, where I use mediation as a case study or an example if you will, for supervisors learning skills for conflict resolution, impartiality becomes a more difficult conversation. I say to my students, you have a mediator hat. You have the opportunity to approach employees in dispute and offer them a process to resolve their differences, rather than a solution. This is a very freeing idea for a supervisor, particularly a new one, who believes they must have the answers. But how do they present themselves as impartial? As a mediator, I am not vested in the outcome of the mediation. I will be paid for my time regardless, and that in itself is freeing, and helps me to stay on that tightrope of impartiality. As a supervisor, people generally are very vested in the outcome of the dispute. Parties may be at their office door at all hours. The morale in the office may be directly affected, and others will turn to the supervisor to fix it. So how, with this "vestedness", do they present their impartiality?

Managers can make some choices to demonstrate that they are on the tightrope, though they may have some hurdles. A big hurdle is perception. Let's take an example where a supervisor, say a relatively new one,

has a dispute between two people: Sandy and Dawn. Sandy was the super's first new hire, and her performance in the department and her relationship with other peers, reflects directly on the supervisor. It may be that the supervisor has something to prove to ensure that this hire works out. Dawn, on the other hand, has been seconded to the department due to union regulations and her seniority. She has not, in the eyes of the supervisor, adapted well to the change and clearly doesn't want to be there. So in this case, perception may be working against the supervisor.

How can this supervisor invite these two employees into a room for a conversation aimed at resolving their interpersonal differences, and present himself as both impartial and not vested in the outcome of the dispute?

An Invitation: Use invitational language to remind both parties that they are both valued by the organization and that they have an opportunity to tell their stories, and to contribute in a structured conversation to their own solutions.

Body Language: Maintain an impartial stance at the table by sitting square to the table. Ask questions to the table and allow the parties to decide who will speak first.

Detachment: Manage your emotions around the situation by detaching the specific details of the agreement from your need and desire for a positive outcome. You may be vested in the need to resolve the dispute, but you can choose not to be

## PULSE COURSES INCLUDE:

- **PULSE Advanced Practice February 24-26, Calgary**
- **Difficult People Webinar March 2 OR March 8**
- **PULSE Level I Mediation Certification April 19-23 Kansas City MO**

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## IMPARTIALITY, CONT'D

vested in the specifics of their agreement.

**Loyalty to the process:**  
Empower the parties to decide on their own how they can resolve their circumstances by offering them a process for their conversation. Be loyal to the process rather than the outcome.

**Consider alternatives:**  
Remember that parties have alternatives to resolution. Provide them with the opportunity to consider those op-

portunities by asking about them. Ask each party in private, what is the best thing that can happen if you do not resolve this? What is the worst thing that can happen?

**Freedom to choose:**  
Empower the parties to engage in the conversation by giving them the freedom to choose. They can save face if you make the meeting mandatory, and then describe the process and their role in that process before offering them the opportunity to choose to

contribute.

Impartiality is easier to discuss than it is to demonstrate. We all carry our ideas and lenses with us, and that is what makes us unique human beings and the world a fascinating place. There are physical things we can do, and things we can say that will help us to set aside those lenses and demonstrate impartiality.

~ Marjorie Munroe, Editor

## FROM NANCY LOVE'S WEBLOG

As an Intervenor (coach or mediator or trainer) I am expected to be impartial. What does that mean?

Impartiality only goes as far as our assumptions about each other. We intend to remain impartial and yet we find ourselves in situations that call for a stand on something. We call ourselves impartial and yet we BELIEVE that what we are doing is helpful. We say we are impartial and yet we may support the underdog in order to arrive at a FAIR agreement. Can we be impar-

tial? 'Be' no. 'Act' yes. As interveners we can act with impartiality. We can behave in a way that allows clients to feel that we are not taking sides, that we see the big picture and are supporting the common good. Yet even that support of something bigger than us is partial, is it not? Because we are acting in service of the greater good, the relationship or something other than ourselves we assume ourselves to be acting impartially. I am not convinced. True impartiality has no, repeat NO, attachment to outcome and no judgement

of what a 'good' outcome ought to include.

Humans are partial. They are partial to each other or to causes. That's what they are. There is no escaping it. Accepting that, we can still hold the clients in equal stead as we move toward a resolution that honours everyone and the situation as presented. That is the most we can ask of ourselves.

To read more from Dr. Nancy Love, visit her blog at

[wordpress.nancylove.com](http://wordpress.nancylove.com)

## WHAT IS PULSE UP TO?

It has been a very busy year so far. We have several things on the go:

*Traveling:* Over the next three months we will be presenting our **Mediation Certification Level I** (or Concepts and Practice) program in Tortola, British Virgin Islands, Washington DC, and Kansas City MO.

*Teaching:* We offer through Government of Alberta Learning a **two-day course in managing conflict**, a mandatory course for their supervisor certificate program. This is an excellent course for new managers, and those who are looking to develop skills for resolving conflict in the workplace. Call us for details on how you can offer it in your organization.

*Writing:* We have just submitted a manuscript for publication entitled **Principals**. (We are struggling for a subtitle – any ideas?) This book, written collaboratively by Nancy Love, Mel Blitzer and Marjorie Munroe introduces through a series of metaphors different approaches to managing mandated change in high schools. You will meet the Impresario, the Sherpa, the Coach, the Rescuer and the Gardener, who work very different ways in very different settings, ranging from a large suburban combined junior and senior Catholic school to a high school in a small remote community. Each achieves success in his own way. Watch for this book on Amazon and Chapters.ca after April 1!

*Webinars:* Mel Blitzer has developed a series of PULSE Leadership **Webshops**. Webshops are engaging 1-1.5 hour skill-based leadership development webcasts focused on relevant leadership topics. The webcasts, delivered in a “radio show” format are designed to give professionals, managers and leaders the concepts, applications and tools they need to better meet the demands of their work as well as to gain the results they and their organizations desire. Sign up now on our website for this free webcast March 2 or March 8.

What if PULSE came to the desert? PULSE has a new coaching course based on the Frame that we hope to have certified by the International Coaching Federation. We are considering having our first offering of the PULSE Coaching Course in Phoenix, June 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>. Our plan for the Desert Retreat would also include an intermediate/advanced class in mediation, a look at our new webcast platform for leadership training and an opportunity to become a PULSE Professional (Trainer). We are hoping you can help us gauge the interest in such an event. Plans also include a Mountain Retreat event for two weeks in Canmore, August 16 – 27, 2010, and a follow up week, September 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in Phoenix to complete the **PULSE Coaching Certification**.

Please email us at [nancy-love@pulseinstitute.com](mailto:nancy-love@pulseinstitute.com) or [loismacnaughton@pulseinstitute.com](mailto:loismacnaughton@pulseinstitute.com) to let us know if you are interested, if the dates work for you, if the place works for you or what combination of dates and places might.

TABLE OF COURSE EQUIVALENCIES		
PULSE	AAMS	JUSTICE INSTITUTE OF BC
Concepts and Practice (Med. Cert. Level I) (40 hours)	Mediation Theory and Skills Level I (21 hours) Critical Skills for Communication in Conflict (14 hours)	CCR102, Building Your Communication Toolbox (14 hours) CCR180 Mediation Skills Level I (21 hours)
PULSE Advanced (Med. Cert. Level II) (40 hours)	Mediation: Case Development (14 hours) Elective Credit (14 hours)	CCR 209, Separate Meetings: Pre-Mediation and Caucusing (14 hours) Elective credit (14 hours)

**PULSE COURSES**

**PULSE Mediation Certification, April 19-23, Kansas City**

A complete 40-hour program that will provide you with the understanding and the confidence to perform mediations. Presented in conjunction with Mediation Training Institute. Register at [www.mediationworks.com](http://www.mediationworks.com).

**PULSE Advanced Practice, February 24-26, Calgary AB**

Are you looking to hone your mediation skills? Have you taken a PULSE program in the past, and are you looking to refresh your skills? Join us for this practice program. Includes two webinars. Register [ONLINE](#).

**PULSE Difficult People Webinar**

**FREE**

Join Nancy Love and Mel Blitzer for a FREE 1.5 hour webinar on Difficult People. Through interactive conversation, and online chat and presentation, you will have the opportunity to explore the behaviours, impacts and perspectives of a veritable rogues' gallery of bullies, tyrants, prima donnas, doom and gloomers, indecisives, backstabbers and nit-pickers. Explore the top ten strategies for discouraging the destructive behaviours of difficult people. March 2 at 9AM MST or March 8 at 11AM MST. Register [ONLINE](#).



**REGISTER NOW!**

You can now register and pay online for all PULSE courses. Visit the course calendar page at [www.pulseinstitute.com](http://www.pulseinstitute.com).



**THE PULSE INSTITUTE**

Suite 640, 1300 8th St. SW Phone: 403 269 2692  
Calgary AB T2R 1B2 Toll Free: 888 882 8804

Email: [pulseadmin@pulseinstitute.com](mailto:pulseadmin@pulseinstitute.com)