

Advice to Those Pondering a Mediation Career

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Some thoughts:

1. Being a mediator is one of the most interesting, fulfilling, challenging and fun careers that you can be lucky enough to be paid to do. It is wonderful to be paid to do something many people will do for free.
2. Don't become a mediator because you are too old, tired, or sick to do your current job. Being an effective mediator can mean very long days of running at 100% and being so present that your energy could power a small city. It is often only your conviction that persuades everyone that there is hope, and that a resolution is possible.
3. A gathering of mediators is a gathering of happy people who don't follow rules and who love process. Go to a convention of mediators and see if that appeals to you.
4. Don't figure out the "right" resolution to the problem and try to pull everyone to it. Find the resolution that will work for the people before you, no matter how little it might make sense to you, a court, or anyone else, and then help the people see how it works for them.
5. Always remember the difference between working on the terms of the deal and arguing about what will happen if you don't make a deal. Know where you are in that dichotomy and be very conscious about which topic will be most helpful at every moment.
6. Remember, you can't force anyone to do anything. You always need to convince them why any action makes sense for them.
7. Don't eat garlic before a mediation.
8. Don't listen to successful mediators saying they have simply been lucky. Luck is the last step in a chain of very focused and determined work.

9. Don't listen to everyone saying "no" to you about a career in mediation. All successful mediators have been told at some point in their careers that there are too many people who want to be mediators, not enough work, no obvious path to success, and no way to make money. And yet they have all succeeded.
10. There is no one right way to mediate. Learn from every theory of mediation. There is no school of mediation that has nothing to teach you.
11. Make sure everyone is eating regularly during a mediation. Especially you.
12. It can be very hard to compete on price. In many mediation markets, charging less will simply make you less valued.
13. Always remain humble. You don't know everything, and the parties are not going to tell you everything.
14. Figure out people by their actions. And don't ignore their words.
15. Remember, it can take a long time to build a thriving practice, but it is worth it in the end.
16. If you resolve a complicated dispute and don't have a corkscrew, don't try to open a bottle of red wine with a pair of scissors. Especially if you are wearing a white shirt, in a white conference room.
17. There is no list to which you cannot add another item. But you need to know when to close.