

Erin Kilroy
Mediation
School Bus Fight

1. Title of Conflict: School Bus Fight

2. Dates of Mediation Sessions: March 12 – March 22

3. Description of the Disputants:

Sally: While riding on the bus to school, Sally claims that Denise pulled a real knife out and stabbed it at her a few times. Sally is threatening to tell her mother and is very upset, not allowing Denise to talk. Sally usually avoids conflict. She witnessed her mother being stabbed and taken to the hospital.

Denise: A mouthy student who claims that the knife was fake and she doesn't care who Sally tells.

4. A summary of the First Disputant's story:

Sally was the first disputant. She was very upset and stated that on the bus, Denise was looking at her in a funny way. Then Denise took a knife out of her bag and began jabbing it at Sally. Sally said she called for the bus driver and tried to push Denise off of her. Sally told Denise that she was going to be in a lot of trouble.

5. Clarifying Questions that were asked:

Denise asked why the bus driver didn't take the knife, because if it was real, the bus driver would have taken it.

6. A summary of the Second Disputant's story:

Denise was the second disputant. She stated that she was playing army at home with her siblings and accidentally left the knife in her bag. She took the knife out of her bag and began playing with it. She thought Sally was playing along, so she continued to jab it at her.

7. Clarifying Questions that were asked:

Sally wondered why Denise didn't think that someone might think the knife was real. She also asked why Denise was playing with her when they usually never play together. She also wanted to clarify that her mom had been stabbed and thought that if Denise knew that, maybe she would understand why Sally was so upset.

8. A listing of all solutions offered:

Denise offered that she could ask Sally to play next time instead of just waving the knife

at her. She also said she would leave the knife at home from now on. They both suggested apologizing to each other.

9. A statement of the Resolution Package - who agreed to do what and when.

Sally apologized to Denise for calling her crazy. Denise apologized to Sally for jabbing the knife at her and agreed to not bring a knife, toy or real, to school anymore.

10. A Narrative Critique of the Mediation. Please include What went smoothly, What was a problem, and How it could have been improved.

During this mediation, I think that laying out the rules and constantly reminding the participants of the rules is a very effective strategy to use. Even when disputants are upset, if they are reminded of how they will be treated and how they should treat others, they eventually comply and begin to work through the conflict in a rational manner. I also think that after each disputant had their chance to say their side of the story, they were more willing to find a resolution because they felt that they had a chance to speak and that someone listened to them.

Even with the parts that went well, this was a difficult mediation to conduct. Trying to mediate in an asynchronous situation proved to have many difficulties. I could not be online to mediate at all times, so sometimes the two disputants would continue to argue the conflict while I was not there to mediate. Once everyone started to explain their sides and follow the instructions, they began to calm down and understand how to resolve the conflict.

I think it is very important for the mediator to keep the rules consistent and require that the participants follow the rules. It is also important for the mediator to intervene when the disputants start to argue with each other instead of telling their side, and listening to the other person involved. I think this technique of resolving conflict will be very useful to me in my teaching career as I deal with student disagreements.

11. A listing of the mediation conversation log pasted in from Moodle Chat or the Online Discussion Board.

Telly Whipbeck: Sally and Denise, these are the guidelines for this mediation process.

- Do not interrupt
- No name calling or put downs
- Be honest
- Agree to solve the problem.

Are you both willing to agree to these guidelines?

Who would like to talk first?

Sally: You can't reason with Denise...she's crazy! She tried to stab me on the bus! Why do you want to talk to me when you should be punishing her for bringing a knife to school?

Telly Whipbeck: Sally, please remember no name calling. I want to hear what happened from both of you. Why don't you start by telling me what happened and explaining the problem. I understand that you are upset by this situation, so let's work this out together.

Denise: It was a play knife *genius*, and I wasn't stabbing it at you I was just waving it around. I hope everyone finds out how scared you were of a play knife.

I can follow the rules Mr. Whipbeck, cuz' I didn't do nothin wrong.

Sally: Whatever!

If it's just a toy, why don't you show Ms. Whipbeck and prove it? You can't, I bet, because you already stashed it...because it was real!

Sally: Fine, I will tell you what happened, and then you will see that she *is* crazy.

We were riding on the bus like always. I was minding my own business, trying not to let Denise annoy me like she always does. The whole way she was looking at me funny, you know, like she wanted to get me or something. Then all of a sudden she's got this knife out of her bag, and she's jabbing it at me. I was really scared, and *mad* so I started yelling for the bus driver and tried to push Denise away from me. I told her on the bus how much trouble she's going to be in now that she did something like *this*.

Denise: I think Sally is just paranoid cuz' her mom was stabbed. Now Sally thinks that everyone is out to stab her. If I had a real knife don't you think the bus driver would have taken it from me?!

Sally should get glasses so she can see that I was just play'n with her.

Telly Whipeck: Denise and Sally,
Please remember the guidelines you agreed to - no name calling or put downs - agree to solve the problem.

Sally - I hear you saying that you were scared by the situation and that you called the bus driver for help.

Denise - Do you have any clarifying questions? After that, could you tell me what happened and how you came to have this knife with you.

Girls - please remember that we need to respect each other if we are going to resolve this conflict.

Denise: If I tell you what happened, and it was not meant to be hurtful, what is going to

happen to me?

The knife is a toy knife my brothers and I use when we play Army. I forgot I had it with me until we were on the bus. I was waving it around because that's what you do with toy knives. Sally started to freak out and I thought she was playing with me, so I kept waving it at her.

Telly Whipbeck: Denise,

Thank you for your calm response. This is what I hear you saying - you were playing with the knife and then had it on the bus and continued to play with it when Sally saw you with it.

Sally, do you have any clarifying questions?

Denise,

What do you think you could have done differently if you could redo this situation?

Denise: I suppose I could have asked Sally to play...instead of just waving it at her. I don't think I was supposed to have the knife at school. So, maybe I will leave it at home from now on.

Sally: I just don't know why Denise didn't get that someone might think it was real. Plus, we've never played together before...how was I supposed to know she wasn't serious? I thought she hated me. I didn't think she would joke around with me on the bus like that.

And she even said she knew about my mom. I think that if she knew what happened to her, she should understand that I might not think it was very funny...even if it was just a toy. That's all.

Telly Whipbeck: Thank you both for you both for your responses. Denise, I agree that you should not have brought the knife to school, even if it was a toy. I also agree that next time you should leave it at home.

Sally,

I understand that this was very upsetting to you because of you mom and it was not a funny situation at all. The knife should not have been at school even if it was a toy.

Denise and Sally, I think we are ready to come to a solution to this problem. What do both of you think would be a good solution? Give a few suggestions and I will write them up for us to agree upon.

Denise: I suppose I should apologize to Sally and promise not to bring the knife to school anymore...if Sally apologizes for calling me crazy.

Sally: I will apologize for calling Denise crazy, because I see now that she was just playing around. I don't think she was really trying to hurt me. I'm glad she won't bring

the toy knife anymore, because someone else could make the same mistake as me. I'll probably try not to sit next to her on the bus anymore, but if I do, I won't be so worried about it. I guess I didn't need to make such a big fuss afterall.

Telly Whipbeck: Sally and Denise,
You have both resolved to apologize to each other. Denise will not bring her toy knife to school anymore. Do you both agree on this resolution?

Sally: Yes, that sounds okay with me. I'm sorry for calling you crazy, Denise.

Denise: I'm sorry Sally. I won't point my toy knife at you anymore.

Telly Whipbeck: Congratulations Sally and Denise on coming to a peaceful resolution. Thank you for your cooperation. We will now end this mediation.

End of Mediaton

Mediators please answer this: Were there hurt feelings or other aspects of this conflict that you think need attention by the administration or other professionals? (Yes/No)

In the end, both students were satisfied with the resolution, but I think it is important for the administration to know about this situation and remind the student body that weapons, real or fake, are not allowed to be brought to school.