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## Learning Library

*Understanding Precedes Resolution.*

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### Ambition and Ethics

Most mediators enter this profession because they genuinely want to help people.

Yet good intentions alone are not enough to sustain ethical practice.

Sometimes ambition quietly begins to influence our judgment.

That ambition may come from a desire to grow a practice, gain recognition, build credibility, or simply generate enough income to sustain an organization and the people who depend on it.

None of those goals are inherently wrong.

The danger arises when our ambitions begin competing with our obligation to the participants.

For example, we may feel tempted to accept cases that exceed our current experience simply because we don't want to turn away an opportunity.

Growth is important.

Experience is essential.

But our responsibility is not to prove ourselves.



Our responsibility is to serve the people who have entrusted us with their conflict.

Sometimes the most professional decision is not declining the case—it is inviting a more experienced mediator to co-mediate. Doing so protects the participants while allowing us to continue learning under the guidance of someone with greater experience.

Ethics also influence how we present ourselves to the public.

Our standards remind us that mediators should be truthful and not misleading when communicating their qualifications, experience, or services. We should never promise particular outcomes or imply guarantees of success.

Mediation is not measured by a “win rate.”

Our responsibility is to provide a fair, competent, and self-determined process—not to sell certainty where none can honestly be promised.

Perhaps the greatest test of a mediator’s character is not what we do when opportunities are scarce.

It is whether our ambition remains subordinate to our ethics when those opportunities finally arrive.

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## In Practice

Professional growth and ethical practice should develop together. As mediators encounter new opportunities, it is important to regularly assess whether a case aligns with their current knowledge, skills, and experience. When appropriate, seeking mentorship, referring a matter to another mediator, or co-mediating with a more experienced practitioner demonstrates a commitment to serving participants responsibly. Ethical decision-making is reflected not only in the mediation room but also in how mediators present their qualifications and communicate about their services to the public.

## Reflection Questions

- Have I ever allowed ambition to influence a decision that required objective judgment?
- How can I continue developing professionally while remaining honest about my current level of experience?
- What does ethical leadership look like when opportunities arise that stretch my abilities?
- How can I ensure that the interests of those I serve remain at the center of my professional decisions?

## Key Takeaway

Ambition can inspire growth, but ethics must remain the foundation of professional practice. A mediator’s responsibility is not to pursue every opportunity, but to exercise sound judgment, remain truthful about their qualifications, and place the needs of participants above personal advancement. When ethics consistently guide ambition, trust is strengthened, professional credibility grows, and the integrity of the mediation process is preserved.

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## Disclaimer

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