



Mediation Stewardship Project

The Hidden Mediator

Understanding Precedes Resolution

Finding the Shared Goal

Estimated Reading Time: 3–4 minutes

The Everyday Moment

A volunteer committee is planning a neighborhood event.

One member wants to spend more money on entertainment.

Another believes the budget should be used for community outreach.

A third thinks the event should be postponed altogether.

The conversation begins to stall as each person argues for their preferred solution.

Then someone quietly asks,

"Can we step back for a moment? What are we all trying to accomplish together?"

The room becomes noticeably quieter.

People stop defending their individual ideas and begin talking about strengthening the community, welcoming families, and creating an event everyone can enjoy.

The disagreement hasn't disappeared.

But everyone is now facing the same direction.

Without realizing it, someone has just demonstrated a mediation-informed skill.

The Hidden Skill

The hidden mediator has a remarkable ability to help people remember what they already have in common.

Instead of becoming absorbed in competing ideas, they gently redirect attention toward the larger purpose everyone shares.

They might ask,

"What brought us together in the first place?"

or

"What outcome are we all hoping for?"

These questions do not erase differences.

Instead, they remind people that disagreement about *how* to move forward does not always mean disagreement about *where* they hope to arrive.

By reconnecting people to a shared purpose, the hidden mediator creates a stronger foundation for productive conversation.

Why It Matters

During conflict, people often become so focused on defending their preferred solution that they lose sight of the reason they came together in the first place.

Families may forget they all want what is best for a loved one.

Coworkers may forget they are working toward the same project.

Neighbors may forget they all care about the same community.

Remembering a shared goal does not eliminate disagreement, but it often changes the spirit of the conversation.

Instead of competing against one another, people begin working toward something together.

Notice It in Your Own Life

Think about a disagreement you've witnessed.

Was there someone who reminded everyone of the larger purpose behind the conversation?

Perhaps they said,

"We're all trying to solve the same problem."

or

"I think everyone here wants what's best."

Those simple reminders often help conversations become more collaborative.

You may have done this yourself without realizing it.

Reflection Question

Can you think of a time when remembering a shared goal helped people move beyond disagreement?

What changed once everyone focused on what they had in common?

Continue Exploring

Next in the Hidden Mediator Series

- **Helping Without Taking Over**
- **The Quiet Question That Opens the Conversation**
- **Knowing When Not to Intervene**

Continue Learning

Shared goals often become easier to recognize when we better understand how conflict works. Continue exploring the **Conflict-Literacy Articles** collection or participate in a **Conflict Literacy Workshop** to strengthen your communication and problem-solving skills.

Educational Use Notice

This resource is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is intended to encourage reflection on everyday communication and conflict. It is not legal advice, mental-health treatment, crisis intervention, or a substitute for professional mediation, conflict coaching,

or other professional services. Every situation is unique, and individuals remain responsible for determining the most appropriate course of action for their circumstances.