

Meditation Enhances Mediation: A Six Sigma Perspective

Tony Belak^{1,*} and Pradeep B. Deshpande²

No problem can be solved from the level of consciousness that created it. Albert Einstein

Abstract

The importance of including meditation in mediation efforts is explained. A considerable body of evidence in the scientific literature, as well as reputed media publications, are supportive of the hypothesis meditation will enhance workplace mediation programs. Together they will lead to less workplace discord and workforce conflict, as well as offer improvements in health, wellness, quality, productivity, and competitive position.

Introduction

Core values that promote trust, diversity, personal and professional growth, mutual respect, and productive communication are absolute necessities in modern, innovative, and successful businesses and organizations. Unfortunately, even the most well-intentioned corporate policies are undermined by unmanaged conflict within the organization. Unresolved conflict is a distraction from the otherwise productive use of time, energy, and resources as it diminishes internal and external relationships and eventually impacts the bottom line.

Conflict in the workplace is commonplace and the cost of workplace conflict can be staggering:

- Research indicates that up to 40% of manager's time is spent engaging in or attempting to resolve conflict;
- Managers sometimes restructure the design and flow of tasks just to reduce interaction between conflicting employees, which can reduce the effectiveness and productivity of the original design;
- Exit interviews, which explore the underlying reasons for an employee leaving a company, reveal that chronic, unresolved conflict is a decisive factor in at least 50% of all voluntary departures;
- Absenteeism is often associated with stress of chronic conflict within the workplace. Physical illness or injury too often have a psychogenic component, caused by psychological or emotional conditions;
- Presenteeism defined as not being engaged in work functions account for about 73% of employees not engaged with work;
- Medical-care costs aside from lost work-time due to illness and injury increase. The rate of claims affects the premiums paid by employers to their health insurance providers and more claims result in higher premiums.
- There is a direct correlation between the prevalence of employee conflict and the amount of damage and theft to inventory and equipment.

^{*,1}Author for correspondence on mediation; Ombuds, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292.
tony.belak@louisville.edu

²Author for correspondence on meditation; Professor Emeritus of Chemical Engineering, University of Louisville, Visiting Professor of Management, University of Kentucky, and President and CEO, Six Sigma and Advanced Controls, Inc., Louisville, KY 40222. pradeep@sixsigmaquality.com

Most conflicts within and involving people revolve around *unfulfilled needs and issues*, including the psychological need for control, recognition, affection, and respect. These needs are natural and quite human in that we all crave them, but when unacceptable or problematic behavior is rewarded in the fulfillment of these needs, difficult behavior is encouraged. There is a prescription to change the behavior but it requires time and patience to tackle the negative characteristics of difficult people. It does not help to ignore or criticize problem behavior or just to brand someone as a problem and be an analyst to their personality disorder. Working to prevent unproductive and negative behavior that had led to the conflict in the first place is the preferred approach. In the following paragraphs we provide an overview of mediation and show why and how meditation can enhance the efficacy of mediation programs and how the efficacy of combining these activities can be quantitatively assessed with six sigma principles.

What is Mediation?

Mediation is a process in which an impartial and neutral third party facilitates the resolution of a dispute or conflict by promoting voluntary agreement by the parties...the process is usually consensual and confidential...the mediator facilitates communications, promotes better understanding and listening, assists in the identification of interests, and seeks creative problem solving to enable the parties to reach a mutually satisfying agreement.

Mediation is the logical extension of negotiations when parties are at an impasse or cannot move in a mutually satisfying direction with their dispute. Parties employ a trained, neutral, and impartial person(s) to assist them in identifying issues and interests. This interest-based negotiation with the mediator identifies options and choices, which the parties may elect in the satisfaction of their needs. This is different from positional bargaining in that parties are asked to listen actively, not argue, focus on the problem, and satisfy each other's needs. The parties retain control of the process, although attorneys or others are invited to participate. Mediation is not compromise or mitigation of the interests in the conflict, but it is collaboration with others to satisfy as many needs as possible. An honest exchange of interests and needs encourages problem-solving and contributes to resolution.

Through design, promotion, implementation, developmental training and learning programs, organizations with a commitment to excellence can diminish friction, increase productivity, and reduce escalation of disputes within the workplace. The purpose of any internal mediation-skills learning program is to promote voluntary, informal, and consensual dispute resolution, promote creative, efficient, and sensible outcomes in conflict management, and reduce the tangible and intangible costs in time and resources associated with workplace disputes.

When parties are given the opportunity to engage with each other directly and focus on the conflict between them, they are provided with an opportunity to (1) increase the authenticity of the relationship which allows the principals to experience a sense of increased personal integrity, (2)

increase their mutual commitment to improving their relationship, (3) diagnose the conflict, (4) increase their sense of control over the quality of the relationship, and (5) discover and experiment with ways to de-escalate the conflict. This is especially important for ongoing relationships. It works when the parties want to resolve their differences in a mutually satisfying way (Nichols, 1995).

The goal of mediation is a lasting agreement created through constructive and positive communication and sharing. Before people can listen to each other, they must often listen to their inner-self, their conscience, soul, mind, heart, or other repository of values. These internal messages may not correlate with an apparent or prudent action to address or resolve the conflict at issue. Often, the primary conflict may be the struggle the parties are experiencing within their independent value systems. The mediation process should help the parties see each other through new eyes, but their values may filter and obstruct a vision of resolution and satisfaction. The dynamics of the internal struggle may not be as expressive as the public dispute. Consequently, the mediator should be comfortable interacting with the parties at an honest and personal level of feeling. The spoken and non-verbal language of emotion and values is an important vocabulary for the mediator to master. Values are the standards and principles we employ to measure right and wrong, fair and unjust, and good and evil. When people express strong feelings, values are almost always close by. Identifying the presence or importance of values in a party can often be the key to unlocking the impasse between internal monitors and behavioral change.

Behavior can change, but only voluntarily, when attitudes and feelings are exposed and explored. Values rarely change, but behavior can be modified to accommodate attitudes and feelings of other parties to the conflict. It is possible to help parties confront their feelings and explore why feelings are either assisting or blocking the progress in the mediation process. Feelings are neither good nor bad...they are just feelings and should be given due accord for their place in the mediation process. The role of the mediator is to manage the ventilation of emotion, and most mediators believe that the opportunity to honestly express strong feelings relative to the conflict is an essential part of mediation. Suppressing or failing to foster the opportunity may increase the likelihood of impasse and frustration. Mediators must be careful to allow the therapeutic release of emotion through feeling affirmation, while not crossing over into exploration of why a party has those feelings as would a therapist.

The identification of parties' values and emotions opens to an understanding of their decision-making processes. Unfortunately, we typically suppress open expression, opting for subliminal or underlying communication of true feelings. Mediators must be attuned to language and expression that implies the presence of values. When a mediator senses values being communicated, those explicit or implicit statements should be explored. Values are often associated with harsh language or words that blame the other side and deride their behavior and solutions, or words that threaten dire consequences, or reference to a venerable citation found in the Bible, Constitution, or other such authority.

Mediators should be aware of the importance of emotion in mediation and identify and affirm the feeling to better manage the process of expressing needs and understanding interests. Parties in dispute will participate voluntarily so long as they perceive it to be safe and the mediator competent. If the parties stay in the mediation long enough their opportunities for satisfying resolution are increased, but no resolution will be satisfying or behavior voluntarily and fruitfully changed until emotions and feelings are recognized as being important to the conflicted interaction, relationship, or legal interests of the parties. Even when the appropriate resolution may be a matter of legal interpretation or question of law, justice is not so blind that she will not peek out from under her blindfold to recognize that human beings with emotions and feelings want recognition and need fulfillment too. When the mediator utilizes emotional expression as a basis and source of information and data to better identify needs and interests, the enrichment of the process will reward the outcome.

Workplace policies, undermined by unmanaged conflict within the organization, do not fulfil the purpose of guiding and directing. Managing conflicts effectively can lead to low-cost solutions that save time, resources, and relationships. Managers and employees alike can benefit from participating in informal mediation or other forms of internal conflict management. Listed below are some of the benefits:

- Fosters equal opportunity in the workplace;
- Reduces the incidence of workplace bullying;
- Maximizes cost effectiveness;
- Is a very good tool to address discrimination and harassment complaints;
- Helps to diffuse hostile feelings and emotions that could lead to inappropriate resolution such as violence;
- Facilitates a direct contact and collaboration between managers and employees, something conducive to a more harmonious workplace;
- Allows managers and employees to have an active role in the resolution process;
- Mediation is confidential, fair, not precedent setting, and binding;
- Parties can move from debate to dialogue.

Mediation Requires Trust

When trust exists in personal and professional relationships, almost everything else is easier and more comfortable to achieve, including problem-solving and conflict resolution. The need for trust arises from our interdependence with others to achieve the outcomes we value. When our actions are consistent with our words, trust is easier to achieve. Because cooperation cannot be compelled, social interactions are a valuable foundation for confidence one feels toward another or toward others to overcome doubt or fear. Trust is the mortar that holds together the stones of the arch we walk through in fulfilling relationships. When trust weakens, the rubble of broken expectations and implied promises impair communication and recognition of the other person as valuable to co-existence or cooperation.

Trust in the workplace is essential for durable, satisfying, and rewarding relationships and is achieved through productive communication, understanding, and respect. It is an assessment that one will not deliberately, accidentally, consciously, or subconsciously take unfair advantage of another and a person's self-esteem, status, relationship, career, and even life are placed in the hands of another with full and total confidence for safety and protection. Parties must behave consistently over time to build trust and follow through on the promises made. In order to achieve this level of trust, all parties must explain their expectations of one another; agree to necessary steps to fulfill the expectations; sanctions for not meeting expectations; and procedures to measure outcomes. Trust contains a strong emotional component, and parties should be able to share their expectations for one another, bargain for expected behaviors, and openly acknowledge mutual distrust. Expectations are created with or without collaboration, and unilateral expectations, when broken, always hurt the most.

The link between rebuilt trust and conflict resolution involves de-escalation; for any conciliatory action to be effective it must involve sufficient trust. The paradox is that in order to trust another one must risk personal loss again. We often demand proof of trustworthiness before a willingness to trust again is considered. Regrettably, one side must take the risk in a leap of faith to launch the process over with more accurate perceptions and clearer communication. Unwillingness to do so will irreparably damage the relationship and exacerbate the conflict situation. Reciprocity requires someone to go first with the hope that the risk of trauma to the person or psyche will be rewarded with a response worth the value of what can be. Hope is the winged angel of the double edged sword...one blade is trust and the other despair.

There is a link between trust and honesty. We may not be consciously aware that we are being dishonest. Sharing and exchange of demands and wants as opposed to needs is positional arguing of bargaining as opposed to interest based. Like an iceberg, the tip of the iceberg which is what we see is above water but what we know about the iceberg is that what is below the water is far bigger, has a much bigger mass, and that sometimes may be more important. That is where the motivation for people is, that is where the need fulfillment is. We have to tell the other person this is what I need, not what I want. There is a difference between what I want and what I need. We might want a lot of things but we might need just a few. These can be things like recognition, acknowledgement, trust, etc. Unresolved, these issues can become obstacles to progress.

Why and How Meditation will Enhance Mediation

The link between mediation and meditation is now clear. It is unresolved needs and issues, a primary source of conflict already mentioned, together with trust and honesty. However, the implications are far broader. To understand this link the knowledge of the S, R, T components of the mindset and the S, R, T level of consciousness (LOC) (The definitions are the end of this article) is required. Each of the 6 ½ billion of us has a specific LOC that makes us who we are. Rare individuals are at the top, many more at the bottom while most of us, somewhere in between these two extremes. A significant sign of high levels of consciousness is that the individual remains serene in the midst of the most unfavorable external conditions that are part of life. The factors responsible for the variations in LOC are: (1) Genetics, i. e., characteristics inherited from

ancestors, and (2) Our own actions from an early age to present. In six sigma parlance this variation goes by the name common cause variability as it arises due to uncontrollable and unknown causes (unresolved issues). They determine why we are at a specific S, R, T level of consciousness in Figure 1. Thus the unresolved issues are the primary reason for why we are at a specific LOC. The S, R, T level of consciousness is not constant but varies minute-by-minute around a stationary steady state. If we can raise LOC individually and collectively, an exponential decline in workplace conflict has to occur. Can this be done? Fortunately, we are tackling a solved problem. It is just that the strategy hasn't been applied for conflict resolution in the workplace.

How to Raise Level of Consciousness of Individuals

There are principally two approaches: (1) a conscious approach is where we track our S, R, T components routinely to ensure that S remains high and nudges higher while the R is controlled at a reasonable value and T remains low and nudges lower; the mediation strategies outlined above fall in the conscious category, and (2) a process whose side-effect is a rise in the S, R, T level of consciousness. Yoga is such a process (Deshpande et al., 2014; 2014).

Swami Vivekananda introduced yoga to the United States over one hundred years ago. Yoga is now popular across the country, but, unfortunately, a narrow definition of yoga has taken root. The yoga of Patanjali (~500 bce) that Vivekananda propagated consists of eight components, not the bone-bending postures that have come to be known as yoga in the United States: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. The first two are do's and don'ts for ethical living, Asanas are for external systems such as muscles, joints, and while Pranayam is for internal organs and systems. The last three are various stages of meditation. Pratyahar refers to the withdrawal of sense organs from sense objects. All eight are required to take full advantage of the eight-fold yoga system.

The sole purpose of the eight-fold yoga system is to raise one's level of consciousness and the principal method to focus on is the process of meditation. Clearly, the external systems and internal organs and systems need to be in good shape if we are to derive the full benefit of meditation. By now, prestigious scientific journals such as Nature, Science, and Proceedings of the US National Academy of Sciences and medical journals such as Archives of Internal Medicine and Neurology Now as well as reputed media publications such as the New York Times, Forbes, and others have carried full-length articles on meditation. Table I lists a sampling of these publications. Missing from these publications is information on the real power of meditation which is to materialize the intention of raising our level of consciousness.

With the advent of the first Copernican revolution in science in the 16th century, people have become increasingly rational minded requiring data and evidence for supporting a hypothesis which is a good thing. Therefore, any success of mediation coupled with meditation must win the

Table I. Articles about Meditation

No.	Authors	Journal	Outcome Investigated
1	Benson, H., et al.,	Nature, 295 , 234 – 236, 21 January 1982	Body Temperature Changes
2	Bhasin, M. K. et al.,	PLOS One, 8, 5, May 2013	Metabolism, Insulin Secretion, Inflammatory pathways
3	Boyers, J.	Forbes, May 30, 2013	Empathy
4	Condon, et al.,	Psychological Science, August 21, 2013.	Compassionate Response to Suffering
5	Deshpande, P. B., et al.,	Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research, 5, 2, February 2014.	Materialization of Intentions
6	DeSteno, D.	New York Times, July 5, 2013	Compassionate Response to Suffering
7	George B.	HBR Blog, 10 March 10, 2014	Leadership
8	Fryer, B.	HBR Blog Network, September 18, 2013.	Compassionate Management
9	Lutz, et al.,	PNAS, 101, 46, November 16, 2004.	Gamma Wave Synchrony
10	Paul-Labrador, M., et al.	<i>Archives of Internal Medicine</i> , 166, 1218, 2006.	Metabolic Syndrome and Heart Disease
11	Paturel	NeurologyNow, August/September 2012.	Meditation as Medicine
12	Specia, M., et al.,	Journal of Biobehavioral Medicine,, Vol. 62 No. 5, 613-622, September 1, 2000.	Stress Reduction in Cancer Patients
13	Tang, Yi-Yuang, et al.,	PNAS, 110, 34, August 28, 2013.	Smoking Reduction
14	Tang, Yi-Yuang, et al.,	PNAS, 109, 26, 10570-10574, 2012	White Matter Changes
15	Tang, Yi-Yuang, et al.,	PNAS, 106, 22, 8865-8870, 2009.	Central & Autonomic Nervous System
16	Tang, Yi-Yuang, et al.,	PNAS 104, 43, 17152-17156, 2007.	Attention and Self-Regulation
17	Wallace, R. K.	Science, Vol. 167, No. 3926, 1970.	Physiological effects
18	Walton, A. G.	Forbes, July 24, 2013.	Healthcare Costs, Student Performance

hearts and minds of management and staff. We now have two tools with which to accomplish this task. One is a scientific framework for individual, organizational, national, and global transformation developed by the second author (Deshpande, 2013) that combines ancient Eastern wisdom and the results of experiments of the last forty years reported by American, European, and Russian scientists into a single framework. This framework consists of two components: Excellence of the external which allows us to do all that we do from wakeup time to bed time including all that we do in the best possible manner, and excellence of the internal whose objective is to raise the S, R, T level of consciousness. The US-developed six sigma scientific methodology for the excellence of the external is a laudable methodology, and it will permit any organization to quantitatively assess the efficacy of the meditation with mediation program.

The typical duration of a rudimentary mediation skills learning program is two days. The lecture on the scientific framework for transformation presents the two components of excellence over two days while the practice of 40-minute daily meditation is taught over several days for reinforcement purposes. Thereafter, the staff and management are expected to devote 40-minutes a day for meditation. This may be allowed during work hours. The benefits of the practice will far outweigh the cost of allowing everyone time for daily meditation.

Raising the Level of Consciousness of the Organization

It is said that on average 25% of the world is transformable to a higher S, R, T level of consciousness. The second author's considerable work supports this hypothesis although the precise percentage may not be exactly 25%. The number of transformable individuals varies across nations. These ideas may well apply to organizations, but the question arises about how we transform the entire organization? The answer is two- fold: First, even if the 25% diligently pursue the suggested route to transformation, the benefits to the organization will be substantial. Second, the benefits of the transformable individual pursuing the program will extend to nonparticipants. There is a considerable body of evidence to support this hypothesis and a six sigma investigation can confirm it.

Conclusions

We have attempted to show the relevance of meditation programs in mediation efforts. Scientific evidence supports the hypothesis meditation will enhance mediation programs. Outcome measures of performance of the mediation plus meditation program can be readily identified and the performance of the program can be tracked with six sigma principles. The program will lead to less dissatisfaction and workplace conflict, as well as improvements in quality, productivity, health and wellness, and competitive business position. The organization benefits when individuals who compose the organizational community raise their level of consciousness.

Research has shown that the most effective leaders at leading and adapting to change at any level in the organization are those that have the highest level of emotional intelligence. Many intractable problems in the workplace are the result of poor communication and lack of self- awareness and other emotional intelligence competencies. The components of knowledge, skills, and abilities that compose emotional intelligence can be learned. Meditation is a means of increasing emotional intelligence. Coaching and mentoring are highly effective mechanisms to support this type of

competency building. The challenge is to accelerate the development of leaders and institutionalize leadership as a core competency throughout the organization. Coaching and mentoring are effective tools for impacting the development of future leaders, and creating environments that support continuous learning, compassion, and collaboration can be achieved through endorsement and implementation of meditation.

Further Reading

- [1] Deshpande, P. B., “Scientific Framework for Individual, Organizational, National, and Global Transformation”, 17th Annual Conference on Science, Information, and Consciousness”, St. Petersburg, Russia, July 6 – 8, 2013.
- [2] Deshpande, P. B. and Kowall, J., Why We Get Sick and How We Could Get Better: A Yogic, Six Sigma, and Quantum Mechanics Perspective, In Submission to *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*, April 2014.
- [3] Deshpande, P. B., Aroskar, S. A., Bhavsar, S. N., and Kulkarni, B. D., Mind Over Matter: Materialization of Intentions, *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*, 5, 2, 2014.
- [4] Deshpande, P. B., Six Sigma for Karma Capitalism, Six Sigma and Advanced Controls, Inc., Louisville, KY 2011.
- [5] Nichols, Michael, P., The Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships, The Guilford Press, 1995.

Definitions and Notes.

- Rising level of Internal Excellence equates to higher S, R, T Level of Consciousness (see Figure 5)
- **S**: Truthfulness, honesty, steadfastness, equanimity;
- **R**: Attachment, bravery, ego, ambition, greed, desire to live;
- **T**: Lying, cheating, causing injury in words or deeds, sleep.
- Minimum S, R, T required for life.
- **S** component strongly correlates with positive emotions (Unconditioned love, kindness, empathy, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, etc.)
- Excessive **R**, **T** components strongly correlate with negative emotions (Anger, hostility, hatred, irritation, sorrow, fear). External
- Excellence of the external refers to the wherewithal of doing all that we do from wake up time to bedtime including all that we do at work in the best possible manner.

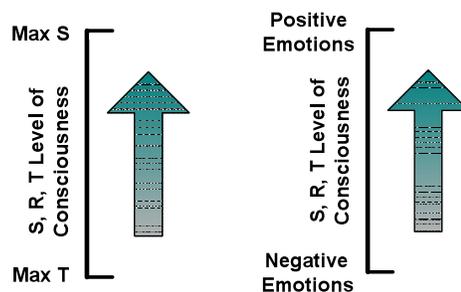


Figure 5 Two Equivalent Representations of Rising Level of Internal Excellence S, R, T (Left) and Emotions (Right)