

ACBM

All in the Class Become Mediators

Teacher's manual

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Available on the Internet as pdf-file

By

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Motto:

*Teachers who can draw their own conclusions
test a new method because they feel it is OK.
Those who are insecure must first know
that many others have applied it.*

- After ACBM was applied, the atmosphere improved in the teenage class.
- Why?
- Because in ACBM the teacher does not tell them how to behave. She just initiates a class discussion about ways of conflict resolution leading to the conclusion that pure mediation is the safest way. After discussion of the guidelines, role-plays in pure mediation are performed.
- What is the main guideline for mediation?
- Find shared concern and you will find a shared solution.
- Is it as simple as that?
- You are welcome to read more about the know-how of ACBM and to understand its guiding principles.

The Shared Concern Approach is a non-profit project. Its products are available free on Internet for teachers and others who are interested in peace education at different levels.

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Steps in ACBM

A 4 - 8 hours' program in native language and/or social science.

1. Preparing the students for the topic of Conflict Resolution.
 - (a) A native language teacher's approach: essay writing;
 - (b) A social science approach: conflicts at macro level.
2. Class discussion arrives at a conclusion: We need mediation training.
3. Students read a 10 page illustrated folder on mediation.
4. A class discussion about the main lines in the folder and preparation for the role-play. (An optional asset: documentary videos of role-plays of mediation training.)
5. Mediation training in 3-person groups. Two of them play parties in a conflict derived from the essays in Step 1. The third one plays the mediator.
6. Various ways of follow-up depending on the incidence of conflict and mediations performed. After some months, possibly a new essay writing.

Contents of the teacher's manual

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- Here the Steps 1-6 as indicated in the above table are elaborated with illustrations and examples.

Part I

How ACBM emerged

Motto:

*A teacher who wants to teach students
something about co-operation
has to know more than the students.
At least ten times more.*

The problem is to find relevant knowledge

If you read only the know-how guidelines (you will find them in Part III) you may feel at a loss when you meet deviances in reality. This will not happen if you know the general ideas of ACBM; you can intuitively derive new solutions when meeting new situations. And in order to explain the general guidelines we start by describing some decisive episodes in the development of ACBM.

Revise the Assertiveness training in the Western culture!

In Western culture a cultivated assertiveness is considered to be a motor for a progressive society. Normally, assertiveness training is not in the school syllabus; it is part of social competence projects. These have their origin in psychotherapy programs, which heal the damaged egos of clients by improving their self-confidence. And strong but smooth egos are needed in market competition. The more a society adopts this version of the struggle for life, the more attractive are the weekend workshops in assertiveness training for everyday encounters.

Assertiveness training takes shape in many ways. There are many devices, for example "Values Clarification". All the participants in small groups tell about their favorite dishes, TV-programs etc. and also what they dislike.

From introductory and less controversial topics the training group moves on to expressing evaluation of persons; to begin with public figures and later about participants in the group. The leader of the group determines the limits of possible outbursts.

Another example of training is learning to communicate one's own feelings, using "I" statements without attacking, blaming or hurting the other person. The trainee is given a situation, for example to encounter a person who keeps interrupting your speech. The appropriate sentence proposed by the trainer is: "When I am interrupted as I try to explain myself, I feel frustrated, and I would like to finish what I have to say."

The contents are similar in all assertiveness-training groups despite their varying the labels, for example "Reaching Out". The educational point is to express one's feelings in group sessions while others have to listen. The others have, to a reasonable extent, to accept what is said and encourage what they have heard. Upon this basis of mutual acceptance some courses continue with various exercises of group corrections of individual assertions: if some opinions seem far too odd, aggressive or threatening, the right thinking majority will tell the deviants.

Accepting the assertiveness of others with or without corrections opens up an ethical dimension.

Parents like assertiveness training as much as their children do. Parents know what is needed to be successful in life. If clashes occur between two assertive individuals, they mobilize friends to get help or appeal to a judge-type of mediator.

Checked assertiveness as basis for ethos.

Enlightened assertiveness training contributes to the prosperity of Western culture. After the school years the “invisible hand” of market competition regulates assertive confrontations; if abuses occur law enforcement is called in.

It makes a country strong.

When a nation, brought up with the above approach, is attacked, the mechanisms that normally regulate assertiveness within one’s own country become fatal at the international level. On the global level there is no legal system strong enough to check big countries that, in practice, become their own judges and push the UN system around.

To ensure global co-existence on the planet it is better to start from a paradigm other than assertiveness.

A new orientation is needed due to the fact that the resources of the common vehicle of Mankind, our planet, are not so unlimited as the settlers imagined when they, once upon a time, rode out to the west.

But what has this to do with the conflict dynamics in your school? Legally nothing. Psychologically very much.

As for the teenagers what their pals say is more important than what their teacher says. The assertiveness training and cultivation principle is completed with group dynamics often initiated by an enemy image.

(If you are reading this on the Internet, click here if you want read more [Enemy image as initiator of group dynamics](#)

[Training kind expressions needs to be completed with shared interest with the other side](#))

Experiments with prepared constructive confrontations

I started with the assumption that those school kids I was going to meet already had a normal or supernormal assertiveness level. Certainly, I was prepared to help individuals who had not developed their assertiveness.

I arranged role-plays of conflict situations for teenagers in 3-person groups. Individuals A and B were in conflict but were instructed to discover good intentions in the utterances of the other side. C was observing A and B. The result was, as you may imagine, that the more real the conflict involvement became the more their aggressive expressions increased.

Attempts to put an ethical constraint upon the aggressive behavior of the parties involved apparently meet with a strong resistance from human nature. It is known that if one wants to create autonomous behavior in the students, one has to find one's sources of motives beyond one's own authority. In other words: I could not put pressure on the students with my ethical recommendations. I decided to find, possibly invent, a totally different approach in my attempts to make confrontations constructive.

Inhibiting aggression was useful but not natural and, hence, not well founded.

I found an expedient in the role of C, the observer of the dispute between A and B. It was pregnant with a new option for education in conflict resolution.

The observers are empowered with the role of mediator and the Shared Concern Approach is found

Even if onlookers of a conflict say that they support a peaceful settlement they will sooner or later take sides. Maybe not definitively, but sooner or later we point out one party as more guilty than the other.

I have found no exception to this observation in my friends or in myself. The reason is that we all are prey to our old biological heritage. Identification with one of the parties is stronger than with the other; empathy causes an adrenaline (epinephrine) release even if one is an observer.

(In the Internet Edition:

Parallels between the physiology of the brain and religious conceptions)

Now back to my conflict plays. The third person, C, who was watching A and B, (the parties in the conflict) had the position of being an outsider and observing the psychological mechanisms of the conflict. He or she could have learnt a lot from this, but what happened was the inevitable identification with one party more than with the other.

But suppose we change the observer into a mediator? Could a task to mediate between the parties convert the rampant adrenaline to the constructive task of helping the parties to find a reconciling solution?

This is how it happened. But not automatically. The mediator's role first needed to be purified.

It was evident that the youngsters liked to play mediator. To begin with, they imagined the mediator to be a kind of judge. It is empowering for one's ego to have the authority to tell the parties which of them is guilty. Or to be an adviser who tells the parties what to do.

The attitude of the parties in conflict was, however, the opposite. They did not like a peer to be a mediator who exercised the power of judge or adviser. What instruction could bring forward a pure mediator, i.e. a person who is neutral in relation to the guilt of the parties, but was involved in the conflict case simply due to his pure desire to find a solution?

I found that the pure mediator principle was inherent in the method approach I had used in solving cases of group bullying without demonizing the bullies:

Seek shared concern in the parties and you will find a shared solution

If this principle was exemplified and discussed with the students playing mediator; they felt that being pure mediator was more secure than taking the role of a judge or an adviser. They discovered the assets of being a useful person bringing the parties together.

Are there constructive conflicts?

Some people say that there are good conflicts that give healthy tension release. And so it is -- if you are the winner or if "both win". Everybody realizes the very decisive difference between one party as a single winner or both parties as winners. What we have to add is that both winners should also share feelings and insights.

The first incentives to become a mediator.

The mediator's role introduced in conflict resolution learning.

Conflicts are good for winners.

Sharing feelings and insights is a main theme in educating pure mediators. At this moment we are stressing just one point: he who says, "conflicts sometimes clear the air" means, hopefully, that it is the solution after the conflict that clears the air, not the conflict. The conflict is in itself always something negative.

Why involve all the class in mediator training?

All peer mediator programs known so far elect or select their participants. The reason is obvious: not all students in a school are capable of becoming mediators. Nor does ACBM mean that all in the class should become mediators. There is simply not time enough to allow all in the class to play the role of mediator. But all the students can be engaged in discussing principles and mediator devices. All have to express their opinion and follow closely the training. The teacher does not push the less talented but cordially invites them to express their opinion. Any criticism from them will be used constructively. According to my experience everybody can understand that what they learn about conflict resolution in ACBM is useful to them.

And here is the main purpose of ACBM: to give all in the class a mediator approach to conflict resolution. If some of the students actually exert mediation when friends are in conflict it is just fine. If they do not look actively for such occasions we have anyway reached the goal of attitude development.

ACBM started from democratic values: in order to secure equity-based democracy in our own society and in the world community, the school should take the chance to increase the social skills of all in the area where all are dependent upon each other's smooth social interaction. The test point of it is constructive resolution of conflicts when they turn up.

Equality is a practical device to counteract unrest in the school amongst those who are not selected as peer mediators. Some schools may take seriously their responsibility to create future citizens who can handle destructive conflicts in a better way.

After the first experiments with ACBM my collaborators and I found that the ACBM program had positive effects on the classroom climate. Teachers explain this effect in various ways. One said, "The whole atmosphere is more relaxed. I can reach the youngsters by eye contact. It confirms that we share a kind of frame of reference".

We need more evidence to confirm the results and explain why they occurred. So far, my explanation is that keeping the class together in all reasoning and exercises and follow-ups creates a subtle group consensus, which dampens the conflicts. The psychological driving force for this is that shared insights are not conveyed as values from an adult. They are discovered by the youngsters themselves in learning-by-doing exercises that involve them in a task they perceive as meaningful.

Part II

Finding appropriate administrative solutions when coping with the syllabus and the psychology of development

ACBM has been introduced in a school subject stated on the syllabus

ACBM has been developed within native language teaching. If there are teachers who think that ACBM can be applied in other subjects, I would encourage them; my conviction is that it has to be launched within a frame of reference that is already known to the students, the teachers and the administrators.

I can imagine the idea of mediation might be introduced by a social science teacher who discusses the actual war against terrorism. After his or her introduction the native language teacher continues with mediation in interpersonal conflicts.

You will come closer to your teenager class if you share your feelings about international conflicts -- but what could aim at a shared solution that would make your class and the world a better place to live in?

I can also imagine that ACBM being inserted in foreign language teaching say, in the fourth or fifth year, after preparation of a vocabulary frequently used in conflicts and their resolutions.

Variations on the ACBM application standards conveyed in this teacher's manual are welcome. I would be very pleased to hear how you get on so that I can pass on your experiences.

As ACBM is now, it is designed to fit into a certain ordinary subject in the timetable where youngsters are trained to express themselves in written and spoken language. In a normal curriculum ACBM finds its place in native language teaching. Normally, the curricula in all countries prescribe motivated treatment of spoken and written language. It is evident that a program limited to 4-8 lecture hours giving tools for the students to handle conflicts will arouse the interest of pupils, parents and the school leaders who have had time for a discussion what ACBM can do.

Conflict management training can find its way into the curricula through teachers who realize that ACBM is not a new burden but *a way of easing the existing burden*.

Finding the appropriate school age

In a professional approach we must adopt our method to developmental factors. I have chosen the teen years for two reasons.

- * Good or bad outcomes of conflict resolution have a more lasting impact during the teens than in the pre-adolescent years.
- * In their teens youngsters test their environment with a fervor that sometimes leads to conflicts and hence need to be able to master the conflict situation.

Part III: The teacher's know-how of ACBM

Step 1. Preparing the students to the topic Conflict Resolution.

Even if all students have experiences of conflicts, their possession of the working concepts necessary for communicating about conflicts is very varying. The goal of the first step is to offer some elementary analytical tools like "party" and "escalation" also to those who can react only at a primitive reaction level.

This means of providing the students with these concepts is classical: to start with the experiences and knowledge they already possess. What is communicated as know-how is based on two kinds of teacher situation:

- (a) A native language teacher's approach: essay writing;
- (b) A social science approach: discussions of macro level conflicts.

The first mentioned approach is more common and more elaborated in the following text simply because it is the one I have been using most in the curricula. The second situation is described in a separate link at this home-site. It could considerably involve a social science teacher or just engage the native language teacher in dealing lightly with the global situation.

You will come closer to your teenager class if you share your feelings about international conflicts -- but what sort of aim at a shared solution would make your class and the world a better place to live in?

Introducing the writing-task to the pupils

The idea is to start with a concrete assignment perhaps to write an essay giving some explanations that satisfy the students' needs for hints on how to perform the assignment. They will then discover that their personal ideas, feelings and experiences will be involved.

Here is a draft for introducing the writing-task to the teenage pupils. You are free to modify it to fit your own way of speaking.

"Today I am asking you to write about conflicts. The heading is:
(Writes on the board)

"How to solve conflicts?"

"Start first by writing about conflicts. Perhaps about some you yourself have experienced. Or conflicts you have heard about. Then write about your observations as to how peoples resolve conflicts. Then your ideas on how conflicts should be resolved. We are later going to discuss them. So please, take paper and pencil and start. (You have half an hour)."

NB! This introductory assignment is only for individual work, not for group work. The aim is to inspire everyone to think and, later, to contribute with one's own ideas to group discussions and activities. Therefore let them write this essay in the classroom. Aim at about 30 minutes' work.

If the pupils start writing immediately leave them to it. Go around and give generally encouraging answers to their questions. But if the pupils are bewildered and ask you for examples try to avoid influence their original thinking.

ACBM is not constructed for handling asymmetric conflicts, i. e. assaults, violence, theft, rape etc. where the guilt is so evident that mediation apparently is inappropriate. All unequivocally criminal acts are asymmetric; the task of ACBM is to train mediators, not future judges or fighters for justice.

However, saying "Do not write about fights" would be to patronize their thinking. So do not explicitly tell them not to write about incidents but implicitly and occasionally you may convey something that prepares a possibility to mediators.

Sometimes students say: "I cannot remember any conflicts right now". Then you may say that they may write something from their own imagination. When saying this you have to add the following: "But it is more important that you write about something that really has happened. And specially interesting are your ideas about the resolution of conflicts."

Then the teacher follows normal routines, which no doubt will encourage those who finish early to think deeply and find something more to write.

Read and think about the students' ssays

Step 2. Class discussion arrives at conclusion: We need mediation training

Take time to read the essays thoroughly. They provide you with new insights into their ways of thinking. If you are an experienced teacher you know that behind their clumsy ways of telling and reflecting about conflict they have thoughts and observations that need your help to verbalize. You may also discover some mature thinkers whose ideas you can mobilize in forthcoming discussions.

In their essays you maybe find a conflict story that can be used as a basis for coming role-plays.

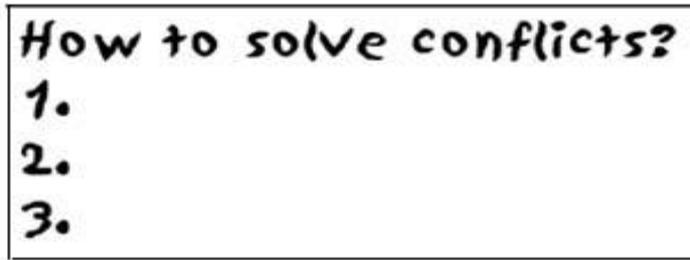
The students often describe casual incidents or unprovoked attacks. In this case, point out the difference between an "incident" and "real conflict" in a simple way. You just say that incidents are solved by simple excuses but "real conflicts" take more time. Certainly, behind an incident there may be something that excuses cannot help. In this case, we have a conflict. Our coming discussion will deal with solving "real" conflicts.

There is a decisive reason for not beginning to analyze one or two of the conflict examples they have given in their essays. It is that every case you analyze has a tendency to narrow the concept of conflict. Taking examples of several varying conflicts would, however, take too much time.

The way to involve all individuals in the class in a common discussion is, as follows:

You distribute a peace of paper of an A5 size(About 4 x 6 inches) that has this content:

Avoid analysis of essays in order to gather all in the class into a central issue:



You tell the students each to write each their own three suggestions. I.e. no group work, we need to involve their thinking.as individuals
After two or three minutes you say that you will gather all answers on the whitebord (or blackboard) and discuss them.

The first column at the board

You appoint one of the pupils as secretary, who writes the answers you are asking the students to read from their papers. Begin by asking everybody's first answer in random order but make sure that all can give their answers. (This is a firm policy imbedded. If you take them "in order of spontaneity" you would give the dominant ones an advantage; You make it clear that all have to give their answers.)

Often an abbreviation of an answer is all that is needed. You decide this. Every answer you tell the secretary to write gets a number. The secretary writes them on the board so that they make a column on the left (leaving space for two other columns you will write yourself later).

If possible the number of answers in the first column should be between 15 and 20. If you notice that some of the answers are fairly alike you ask the student who has given an answer resembling one already on the board: "Can we combine your answer with answer to No. 8?" If this meets with agreement, the secretary indicates this by a short oblique stroke beside the similar answer already on the board.

As is shown on a table (that is a protocol of a procedure already used) you will see how the strokes by the first column indicate that several persons have given similar answers.

When all have answered the first round you ask them about their second answer and so on. If there are 20 students in the group this would theoretically mean 60 answers. Probably the time is too short to listen to all 60 so you may abbreviate the procedure after the second round (answers indicated as No. 3 in their slips).

The second column on the board: "*Condensed answers*"

Tell the class that it will be necessary to condense these answers now in the first column into three basic approaches to solving conflicts. "I am calling this column *Condensed Answers*".

You then write on the board in column 2 (see the "board" further below) names of three conflict resolution categories: (1) Avoidance, (2) Fighting back (aggression) and (3) Constructive discussion. Ask the students to give examples in order to get these three concepts explained.

Appoint a secretary and ask him or her to write the students' answers

Write yourself a second column condensing the students' answers into three categories

"To which category does the first answer (in the first column) belong?"...
 "Right, this is ...so we put it to the category... " We write there the number of the answer, that is number one right now."

Do not spend too much time trying to classify all the answers correctly. It is more important that you have time reserved for the coming discussion of the assets and drawbacks of these three basic categories.

Column 2 is ready when all answers listed in the first column are classified and their number order referred to in the three categories.

The third column on the board: "*Conclusions*"

Now you discuss the pros and cons of the categories in the second column and write the conclusions in a third column, calling it "Conclusions" For example:

"All these three basic conflict resolution methods (Avoidance, aggression and discussion) have their pros and cons (advantages and disadvantages) Let us start with "avoidance".

Avoidance. "What is good about avoidance?" ("Right, if somebody just provokes/teases you, there is no reason to fight or argue." ... "Don't waste energy on conflicts that may pass anyway.")

"But what is the bad thing about avoidance?" ("Right, if your antagonist dis-covers that you prefer avoidance he can use you" ... "You cannot avoid all conflicts.")

If the students give acceptable answers, try to write these or abbreviations of them on the board indicating assets with "+" and drawbacks with "-". In the example in column 3 on the board I have written "but it is boring" because that is what was the spectacular answer in a certain class on a memorable occasion.

Fighting back (aggression) "When is fighting back needed?" ("Right, you need defend your integrity (freedom, territory) when somebody attacks you.")

"But what is the bad thing with aggression?" ("Yes, you get hurt yourself.") Do not miss to explain the important concept of escalation. It is difficult to limit aggression. When you fight back you tend to pay back in kind and so does your antagonist, while you both think that you are just "being just".

As our mood now is more of a rational analysis than sharing emotions our depreciation for aggression should be of rational reasons. When I illustrate the mechanism of escalation I use examples of recent international conflicts which are known to everybody. The conflict story that has been in focus during the latest years is the Israeli-Palestine conflict. The aggressive representatives of both sides tell that they intend to reduce the other side's violence by using their own violence.

Constructive discussion. We have to indicate the quality of discussion. I use the word "constructive" but there are others. (E.g. the guideline of the Shared Concern Approach could be introduced to define the quality or constructivity of a discussion: "Seek shared concern and you will find a shared solution").

The youngsters normally favor the answers that we here categorized as "Constructive discussion". Most definitively they correctly expect from the

The concluding column is yours

teachers that they let "constructive discussion" emerge as a strong alternative after analyzing the good and bad sides of the previously mentioned approaches.

My educational point is, however, to avoid promoting the value of constructive discussion as an ethical command but rather something that in most cases is the most practical. Consider also the weak point of the discussion: it is difficult to apply when you are involved as one of the parties in conflict. We find it very difficult to see that our opponent may be right.

This will lead us to the point for which the whole table was preparing: *parties in a conflict need a mediator.*

Arriving at this conclusion takes at about one hour. Try to have a second hour in reserve -- but not more. You need to keep their interest alive so that they have some involvement left to agree with your proposal that we need mediator training.

At the following page there is an example of condensing the students' answers on the board.

<u>Original brainstorming</u>	<u>Condensed proposals</u>	<u>Conclusions</u>
1. Walk away ///		+ Avoidance may help sometimes - but is boring
2. Avoid meeting the antagonist ///	<u>Avoidance</u> 1, 2, 11, 12	
3. Tell parents /		
4. Get some friends to stand up for you //// //		
5. Ask the antagonist why he is mean to you //	<u>Fighting back, getting support for one's case (aggression)</u>	- Violence breeds violence (aggression breeds aggression) = Escalation of conflict
6. Tell the teacher /	3, 4, 6, 9, 10	
7. Ask the antagonists to put himself in the each other's shoes /		
8. Get the two parties together ///		+ Discussion is best for conflict resolution
9. An adult talks to the bully	<u>Discussion (about the common problem)</u>	- but if you are angry, discussion is nearly impossible
10. Laugh it off /	5, 7, 8	
11. Stay calm //		
12. Find the reason why he/she did it //		Grand conclusions:
		We need mediators!
		We need mediator training!!

Step 3. Students read a 10-page folder on mediation technique

The administrative question now is when and how you introduce the brochure about mediation? You have to decide this on the basis of your acquaintance with the class and their working habits, the availability of time on the schedule and your assessment of their maturity and mood of the day. In general there are two main alternatives.

If you consider that they can read the instruction booklet by themselves at home distribute it to them with a few comments at the end of the Step 2 just finished. If the reading has to occur in the classroom, you may give a longer preparation time.

The main motivation in your introduction is your question: "What does a good mediator do?" Listen to several answers but do not give a definite answer yourself. Say that they will find it when reading a booklet you are going to distribute right then.

Here is a task that is supposedly in accordance with your syllabus: to train the students to find know-how answers upon a general question in the booklet provided. Certainly you are there to help them but first they have to make their own search. How you carry it out depends on your working habits. I would suggest the following instruction:

"If you get stuck in a passage, demarcate it by underlining it with a wavy line ~~~~~, if possible write your question and wait until we get the opportunity to discuss."

This opportunity may come next day after their home study or, if they read it quietly in the classroom, you may divide the reading hour, say, into 15 minutes reading periods and 5-10 minutes discussion sessions.

The booklet or brochure is not available on the Internet but can be ordered from me. anatol.pikas@ped.uu.se. Or: Professor Anatol Pikas Department of Education, Uppsala University, P.O.Box 2109 S- 754 02 Uppsala. Or: telephone home: 0046+18-14 11 72.

The reason is that I wish to keep contact with the users of the ACBM during the first years of its development. My intention is to act as an intermediary in contacts between them.

Step 4. A class discussion about the main directions in the folder and preparation for the role-play

Steps 3 and 4 have the same intention; their difference lies in the level of understanding of the main goal. The best preparation for it is just your own reading of the 10-page brochure and preparing the points that you consider as important.

In principle, to begin with, in Step 3 you try to put questions and try to accept their answers. Your comments should point ahead at a mediation technology in the service of the guiding principles. As you know from your teacher experience, examples of applications are summarized as principles and, the other way round, are derived from principles.

Here are some rehearsal questions making a checklist of insights you may check with the students before they start role-plays.

Question: Why can't the parties solve their conflict themselves?

Answer: Well, if they can, no mediation is needed. But as you know, when you are party in a conflict, your body state is changed. You experience physiological hindrances.

Question: What do you mean by "physiological hindrances?"

Answer: A body is under the influence of adrenaline (epinephrine) which makes it more agitated. This is a reaction in all human beings. The onlookers also take sides. A mediator has adrenaline (epinephrine) in his body too, but uses it differently. How? ...Yes, his or her task is to bring the parties to a solution. So the mediator's energy is used to something constructive. ... Do you know what I mean by constructive?". [Additional readings for the teacher about this subject is available at different places at this Web-Site. For example A Peace Education Dialogue at the end of the year 2001 Or: what the Nobel Prize laureates were missing. Or: how TV -- unintentionally -- makes clever people appear simple-minded. A specially designed lecture for the teenagers will appear in January 2002.]

Question: How should a mediation start?

Answer: The mediator talks with the parties separately

Question: What is the first aim of the mediator?

Answer: Just to listen in a therapeutic mood. That means to listen to this person's own ideas and feelings about the conflict without making any critical comments. The goal is to gain confidence of the other person.

*Question:*When the mediator has the party's story and confidence is obtained, what next?

Answer: The mediator asks: Do you have some ideas on how to solve the conflict?

*Question:*Suppose the party has no ideas.

Answer: Well, do not give up. If possible, you explain your role: "I am not an adviser, I am a mediator who can help the parties to find a solution which is based on their own ideas. I can help you only if you have your own ideas.

*Question:*But suppose this party still has no ideas for solution.

Answer: Then I would try an ultimate move. I would ask: "Do you like the conflict?" Supposedly the *answer* is "No". (If it is "yes" you just resign as mediator. You cannot make miracles.) Then you encourage the party again to think independently. If, contrary to your expectations the party has no contribution, you come up with your own ideas. The self-evident proposition is of course that you say to the party that you will go to the other party and see if he or she has any proposals.

*Question:*Do you know what is the main thing that intending mediators have to be trained for especially?

Answer: The mediator's attentive listening to the faintest hints of a proposal and to give an immediate reinforcement to this. ("You said something very interesting there, tell me more about it... ")

Question: What is meant by "shuttle diplomat"?

Answer: A good shuttle diplomat is a person who brings positive ideas from one party to the other and vice versa before the parties meet.

*Question:*When should the mediator bring the parties together?

Answer: Not before there is a beginning of an agreement or at least a discernible intention to solve the conflict.

The brochure for the students is intended to stimulate their first thinking about mediation. It contains a minimum of text that gives them the basic empathy about the mediation situation. The general approach has to be given as a summary after the teacher has checked the know-how basis in the above rehearsal.

How would you as teacher express the general approach of ACBM? Please, take a pause for thinking and formulate some guidelines of your own before you check my answer. - - -

When you read my answer, you hopefully think, "here is just an alternative that completes mine". As the author of ACBM I find it most important that teachers use it with involvement and for this an investment of their own ideas and solutions it is necessary.

Anyway, my answer is expressed by an imaginary address after the rehearsal questions above. The wording of it will probably be improved when conveying it to the students:

(Teacher:) Now I will discuss some ideas that are not directly in the brochure. Firstly, there is a principle that governs all good mediation. It is called the Shared Concern Approach. Can possibly any of you guess what it means?... Well, it means: **Seek shared concern and you will find a shared solution....** Can anyone explain what this means? ... What does it say especially for the mediators?

The students' answers are probably just synonymous expression of this basic sentence. But be prepared for students coming up with original expressions of the same basic idea.

As regards the next overlapping issue I suggest that the teacher should put the following question: "Do you know what is meant by 'therapeutic listening'?" Among good answers you may get the following: "Supportive listening that can heal someone who is sick". "A friendly, supportive, no-blaming, encouraging, (etc.) listening.

When the concept of "therapeutic listening" is clear, you may base a summary of the pure mediation:

"Therapeutic listening makes finding the shared concern and shared solution possible. First the mediator finds it in one party and then in the other. Then the mediator checks the propositions with the both parties before he or she brings them together."

Sometimes my collaborators show documentary videos of role-plays of mediation training. These are available as videos visible with the PAL systems of TV-sets or as CD-diskettes visible on computer screen. In order to get these a personal contact is needed with me anatol@pikas.se
Or: Professor Anatol Pikas Department of Education, Uppsala University, P.O.Box 2109 S-754 02 Uppsala. Or: telephone home: 0046+18-14 11 72.

Step 5. Mediation training in 3-person groups

Two of the three-group members play parties in a conflict that is derived from the essays in Step 1. The third one plays the mediator.

Here are some examples of conflict stories used at my collaborators in Sweden:

Marilyn and Sissy. Clothes and cerebral palsy

Marilyn inherits clothes from her big sister. Sissy in her class teases Marilyn about this. Marilyn has tried not to bother herself about Sissy's insults but Sissy would not stop.

Then Marilyn learns that Sissy has a baby brother with cerebral palsy. Marilyn starts talking about this to the others in the class adding that "this runs in Sissy's family".

Johnny took over Henry's girl friend

Henry and Johnny were once good friends. But then Johnny took over Henry's girl friend Susan. Henry was depressed. But Susan also abandoned Johnny and became somebody else's girlfriend. Henry is still bitter and even very nasty towards Johnny sometimes. Johnny pays him back.

It is advisable that the role-plays are performed in teams consisting only of girls or only of boys. The girls' names in the above stories should, then, of course, become changed to the boy's names and the boys' names changed to girls' names.

This step has an organizational problem: to give as many as possible in the class the opportunity to perform in the role-plays. There are, in principle, two solutions to this.

Firstly, the teacher prepares a selected three-person team with the assignment to perform the play when the others in the class are onlookers. The times are changed two or more times.

Secondly, the teacher has some colleagues or others who can survey the plays of all in the class that are going on in various rooms in the school. At the beginning of the role-plays, when the mediator meets only one party at time, the other party is unoccupied. This unoccupied party has to get something sensible to do when waiting.

In both cases, the whole class is provided with the conflict stories.

The most common use would be that the teacher gives first a demonstration to a selected team. Then all the others, divided into 3-person teams, play the roles.

Step 6. Various ways of follow-up depending on conflict incidents and mediations performed

A follow-up is advisable. When or how, depends on the teacher's intuition and availability of time. A new essay writing could possibly take place after asking the students, a month or two later to write about conflict resolution again, and focus especially on the problem as to whether the training has had any effect upon their approach to conflicts.