



Legal Choices to Help with Communications

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Collaboration, mediation, arbitration, litigation - they all sound so complex! Perhaps defining each would help to solve the mystery.

The American Heritage dictionary states that **collaboration** is to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort and to cooperate reasonably, as with an enemy occupation force in one's country. I have noticed the word collaboration appears more frequently than ever in meetings, project planning and even relationships. It implies that individuals can use their own skills and abilities to accomplish goals.

Mediation, according to *WordNet* is negotiation to resolve differences conducted by some impartial party or intervening for the purpose of bringing about a settlement. Sometime the mediator is a trained professional and sometimes s/he is a wise and experienced individual such as a mother who objectively resolves problems between siblings.

Arbitration is described by *Investopedia* as an informal hearing regarding a dispute...judged by a group of people (generally three) who have been selected by an impartial panel. Once a decision has been reached, there is no further appeal process. We frequently hear this term when professional sports teams are negotiating contracts with their athletes. Typically, one party aims unrealistically high and the other one aims really low, and the settlement occurs somewhere in the middle.

Litigation is a legal proceeding in a court; a judicial contest to determine and enforce legal rights. This is the typical justice system drama that involves a judge, jury, lawyers and court room.

Everyone has problems and sometimes they can be worked out through planning or talking with friends and family members. At other times it is helpful to gain the assistance of an objective person or group of people who will listen to both sides of the issue and then direct a process for resolution.

Usually the most expensive and time-consuming form of problem solving involves our Justice system which, in itself, has a number of divisions and levels for appeal.

The more that I work with people, the more that I realize how much trouble could be resolved if we each had better **communication** skills. *Dictionary.com* claims that this involves the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing or signs.

Perhaps, rather than focusing on trying to find an appropriate method for solving problems after they occur, we should be putting more emphasis on learning how to communicate better as individuals, groups, societies and countries to prevent misunderstandings.

How can you improve communications in your life?