

### Mediator Insights: Just Ask

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Mediation is a multilayered process including, among other things, sharing, learning, probing, and exploring. Sometimes, one or both parties get stuck. And sometimes the stuck party will say “they will never accept what I can offer.” Instead of trying, the stuck party has prejudged how the other side will respond. To which I always say – you will never know until you try, so just ask, and then we will find out.

To illustrate, let’s consider Christopher Denise’s *Knight Owl*.

Since the day he was hatched, Owl has only wanted one thing – to be a Knight. He dreamed of it. He worked hard for it. And then he applied to Knight School and was accepted. His dreams were about to come true!

Although an excellent student, the physical part of being a Knight was challenging. Given his size, it was hard to hold a sword or wield a shield. And he kept falling asleep during the day. But he persevered and his commitment paid off. He graduated from Knight School with honors.

Owl was assigned to the Knight Night Watch. He was really good at it. While other Knights fell asleep, Owl was alert and diligent. Then, one night, Owl heard a strange sound. And he saw a strange sight. Rising up, up, up above the castle was a dragon. A very hungry dragon.

The dragon thought Owl looked like a tasty snack. Owl protested. Then Owl had an idea. He offered the dragon pizza instead. Turns out, this dragon loved pizza, so they spent the rest of the night talking and eating pizza.

This story perfectly illustrates the point. Don’t prejudge how the other side will respond, just ask. They may say yes. Or the dialog may continue. Either way, you will be one step further down the path to resolution.



*Author's Note: As a mediator, I am a "forever student" always seeking new ways to help people find a path to resolution in mediation. As a parent, I have spent a gazillion hours reading books to my children. Oftentimes, these books teach me new ways to approach conflict resolution. In this case, Christopher Denise's "Knight Owl" inspired this post.*

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