

**ADR Insights: Goodnight Moon**

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“Goodnight room, goodnight moon, goodnight cow jumping over the moon...”

Does just reading or hearing those words make you feel more relaxed?

That is the beauty of Margaret Wise Brown’s book “Goodnight Moon.” Her book has helped children fall asleep for decades and teaches us a valuable lesson for conflict resolution. Let’s explore this concept by looking more closely at the story.

The story and imagery are simple. The book starts by painting a picture with words and images as a little bunny is getting ready for sleep.

“In the great green room, there was a telephone and a red balloon and a picture of the cow jumping over the moon and there were three little bears sitting on chairs, and two little kittens, and a pair of mittens, and a little toy house, and a young mouse, and a comb and a brush, and a bowl full of mush, and a quiet old lady who was whispering ‘hush.’”

Next, the story takes us through the bunny’s bedtime routine of saying goodnight to all in the room. “Goodnight room, goodnight moon, goodnight cow jumping over the moon...” Ending with “Goodnight noises everywhere.”

This story's patterns, repetition, rhymes, and simple imagery soothe and comfort us. There are no surprises. There is no real climax. There is just a calm and peaceful bedtime routine.

What does “Goodnight Moon” have to do with mediation? Or arbitration? Or conflict resolution in general?



It helps to illustrate a tool in a neutral's toolbox. Whether mediation or arbitration, inherently all forms of conflict resolution involve conflict. While we cannot eliminate conflict from conflict resolution, we can create a safe space that allows parties to work through their conflict to find a path to resolution. In mediation, that may mean giving parties the opportunity to share and process their emotions. In arbitration, that may mean giving parties a fair and efficient means for each to tell their side of the story. Just as with "Goodnight Moon," mediators and arbitrators use routine, repetition, and basic rules to put parties at ease.

*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, Margaret Wise Brown's "Goodnight Moon" inspired this post.*

*Disclaimer: Nothing contained herein constitutes legal advice nor does anything contained herein create a professional relationship.*