

## Mediator Insights: It's Impossible

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They said: This case is impossible to settle. I responded: It is only impossible if you don't try.

I am not referring to one specific mediation, but to a commonly identified obstacle to resolution. Parties often say in frustration "this is impossible." But the important thing to understand is that the "impossible" obstacle often isn't the underlying dispute, but the mindset of those involved. If you just try, sometimes you can achieve the impossible.

To illustrate, let's consider Tracey Corderoy's *It's Impossible*.

In this story, Dog runs a successful laundry service in a busy and noisy city. Dog also longs to visit the ocean, but it is very far away. Instead of traveling to the ocean, Dog brings a little bit of the ocean to him. He sleeps with an ocean nightlight. He reads ocean tales. He relaxes in a hammock as if he were on the deck of a ship.

One day, Dog buys a new laundry detergent called Ocean Magic. It is indeed magical. As the washer runs, the room smells just like the ocean. Dog loves it.

Then, Dog hears something. He turns and finds a crab in his laundry basket. Neither Dog nor Crab knows how he got there, but Crab really wants to go home to the ocean.

Crab asks to borrow a bike, but his feet won't reach the pedals. Crab asks Dog to mail him back, but he would be squashed in the mail. Crab then announces that he will just walk back, but Dog shows him a map and it is miles and miles away.

Dog laments "I've always wanted to go to the ocean. But it's too far to drive. It's impossible."

Crab keeps probing and pushing until, one day, Dog comes home from the laundry to find that Crab has packed Dog's suitcase and is ready to go. Dog again protests that "It's impossible." To which Crab responds "It's only impossible if you say it is. . . Can't we try?"

And that's just what they did. They loaded up Dog's car and off they went on their cross-country road trip. Along the way, they saw many sights, made lots of new friends, and overcame many obstacles from long and windy roads to fierce winds to downed trees and roadblocks. Finally, they reached the ocean. And it was just as magical as Dog had hoped it would be.

But all vacations must come to an end. It was time for Dog and Crab to say goodbye. Crab wanted Dog to stay. Dog started to say – it's impossible – but then he stopped himself and said – it's only impossible if I say it is. Dog and Crab now run a magical café on a magical beach at the ocean's edge. And they learned that, when they work together, nothing is impossible.

So let's examine this. Dog's mindset was it's impossible. With help from Crab to explore his concerns, Dog's mindset shifted to let's try. While their journey was filled with obstacles, working together, they overcame these obstacles to make the impossible possible.

Which is exactly what can happen in mediation. The mediation process allows parties to shift their mindset, explore ways to overcome obstacles, and find their path to resolution thus making the impossible possible.

*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, Tracey Corderoy's "It's Impossible" inspired this post.*

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