

Mediation with Older Couples

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4th World Summit on Elder
Mediation Summit
May 9, 2011
Bern



A Mediator's Necessary Basic Knowledge:

- - Mediation knowledge: Process steps, methods, mediation techniques
 - Knowledge regarding developmental tasks in old age, and the “collision model” of older couples
 - Understanding of contemporary history, expertise regarding ageing and frequent illness
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Objective of Mediation with Older Couples: „Changing the Situation, not the Human Being“

- - Resolving current concrete problems (present)
 - Old marriage conflicts as a sign of the current conflicts (past in the present)
 - Tackle developmental tasks in old age (future)
 - Clarifying relationship, improving relationship only indirectly
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Specific Developmental Tasks / Life Topics in Older Age

- Grappling with conflicts in later professional life /
Transition into post-professional phase - retirement
- Identity and sexuality
- Marriage, parenting – being grandparents
- Practical life space (living in age-adapted environment, loss
of familiar surrounding)
- Reduction of capacities, illness, in need of care, loss, death



Conflict Situations of Older Couples in Mediation / Examples:

- - Continuous disputes regarding certain developmental tasks in older age
 - Distribution of tasks
 - Common interests / habits / rituals in daily marriage
 - Control / autonomy
 - Relationships outside marriage
 - Social contacts (relatives, friends)
 - Economics (money, debts, money problems)
 - Old injuries
 - Sexual needs / tenderness / genitality
 - Illness, infirmity, dependency on care of one or the other partner
 - Living arrangements/ loss of surrounding



Specifics of the Mediation Process with Older Couples

- Clearly explain the scope of mediation and distinguish from couples' therapy
- Establish confidentiality inside and outside
- Normalize the listed topics
- Carry old marriage injuries into the current context
- Limited number of meetings; distinct time frame
- Focus on short-term, distinct, limited agreements
- Record also images/drawings and transmit the minutes to each party
- Explicit connection (repetition) to previous session