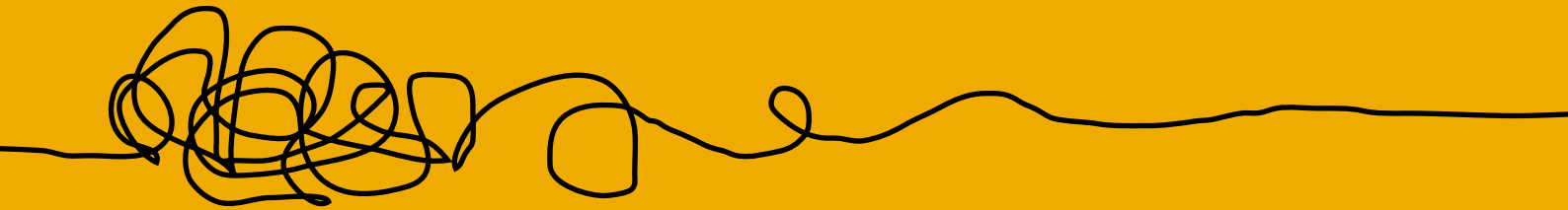
Take Two: Workplace mediation from each party's perspective

This is the real life story of how mediation helped two colleagues whose working relationship had fallen apart, which led to stress, illness and a breakdown in communication.



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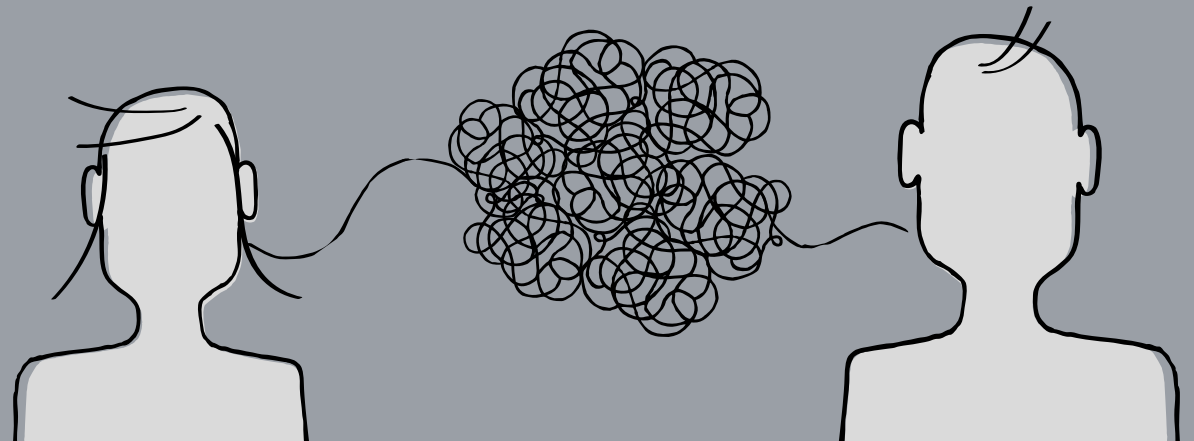
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With many thanks to A and U for sharing their experience.

When relationships break down in the workplace,
it can cause much suffering.

> “Previously my boss and I had a good relationship. But I went through a period of illness and the relationship deteriorated. The situation left me feeling anxious at work and guilty about my own illness.”

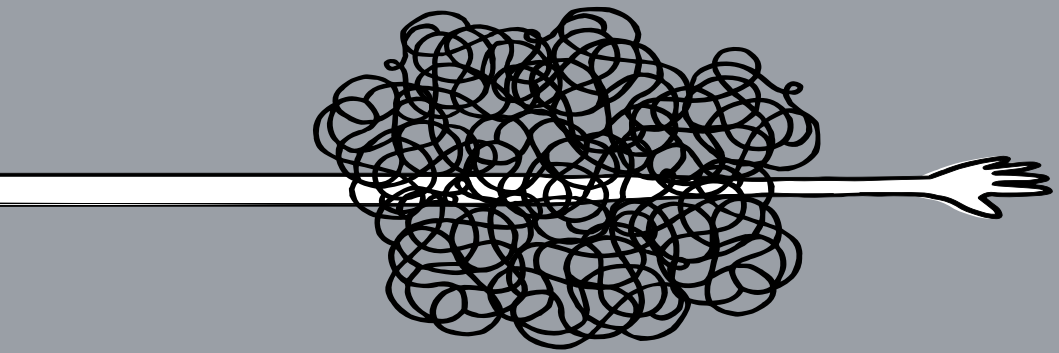
> “I had the feeling our conflict was taking up too much time and energy for both of us.”



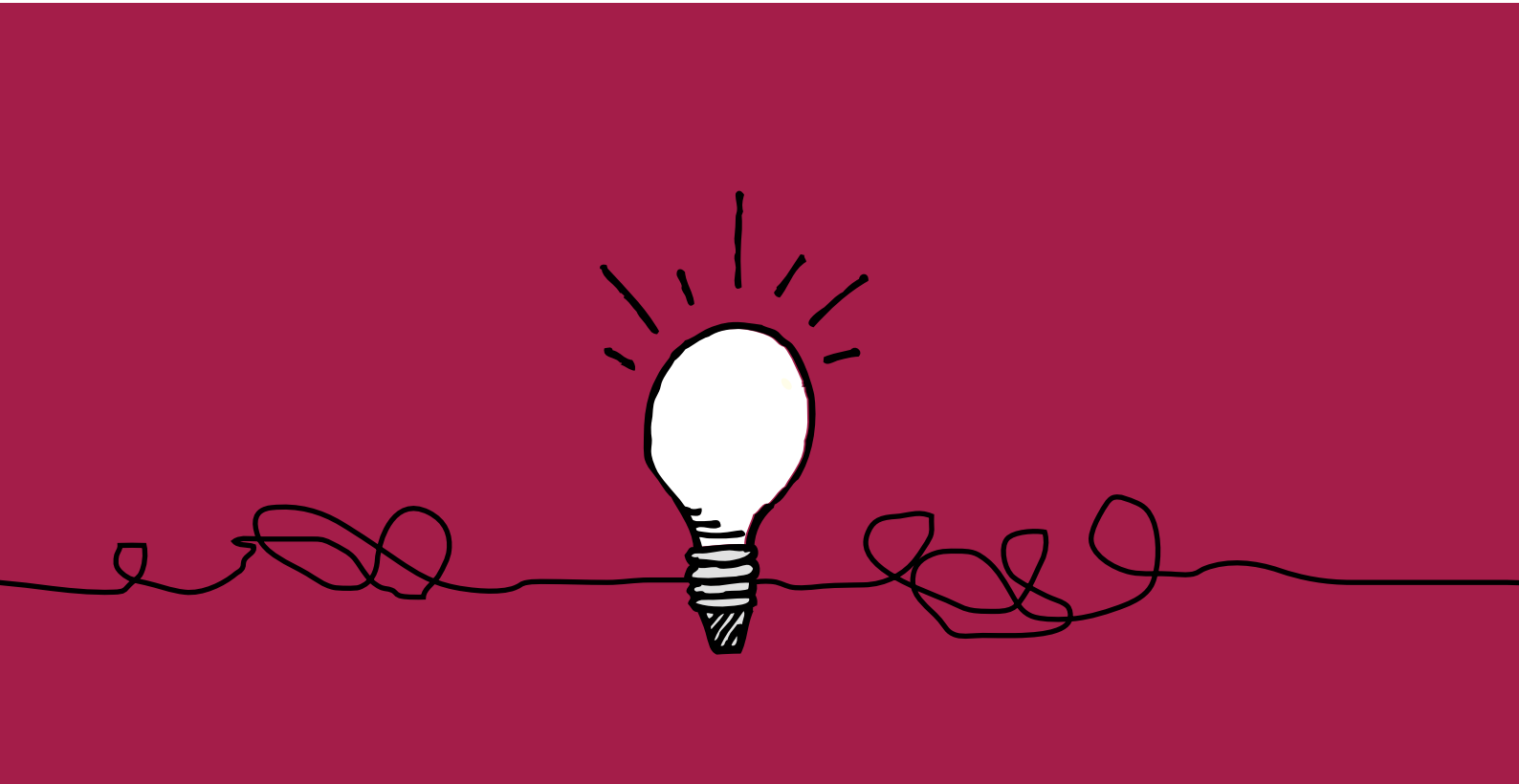
It isn’t easy to find a way through alone.

“We didn’t seem able to do anything about it on our own.”

“I thought that it would be helpful to talk to an independent party who would approach our conflict professionally.”



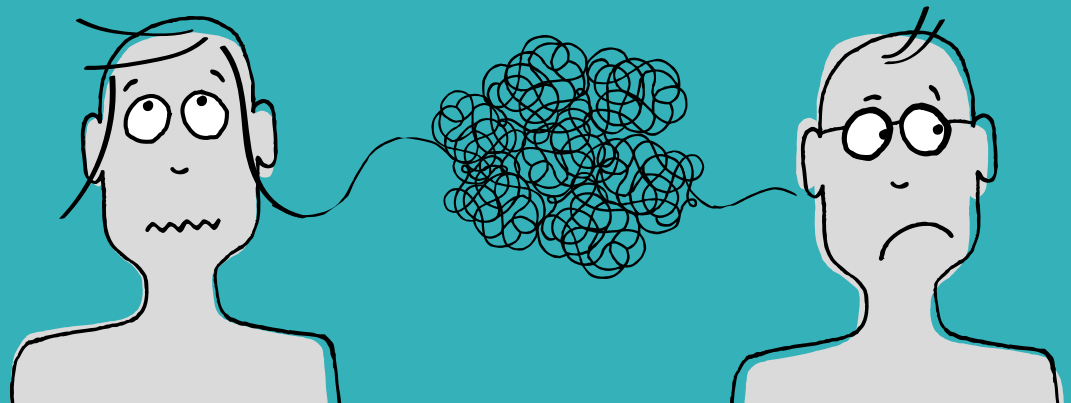
Mediation provides this outside support whilst allowing the parties to make all the decisions for themselves.



Mediation can sometimes feel like a daunting prospect...

“I felt extremely nervous and nearly cancelled, but felt it was the right thing to do to work things out.”

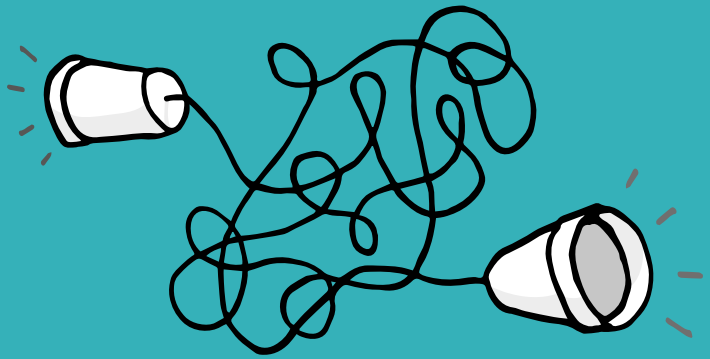
“I also felt slightly anxious as the mediation day approached…”



...but there are things that can be done to smooth the way.

> My boss had approached me at work a week or so in advance to say how glad he was that we were seeking mediation; that really helped me to feel positive about it and more confident that we would work things out.

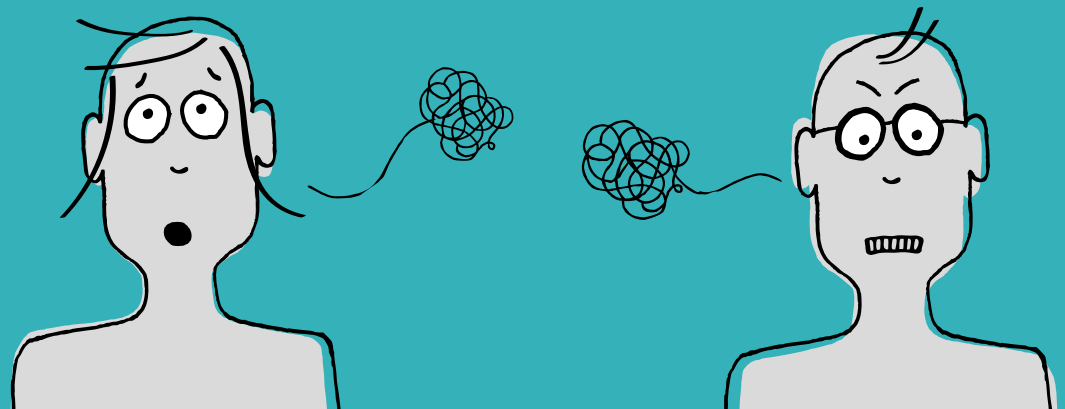
> I found the pre-mediation booklet and questions to prepare very helpful to get a clear definition of what the problem was for myself. I appreciated the prior phone call from the mediator.



Mediation usually begins with a one-to-one conversation with the mediator. This is a chance to think things through before coming face-to-face with the other person.

> “It was really good to be able to talk things through with our mediator first. It helped me to get my thoughts straight in my head, and get the initial nerves out of the way.”

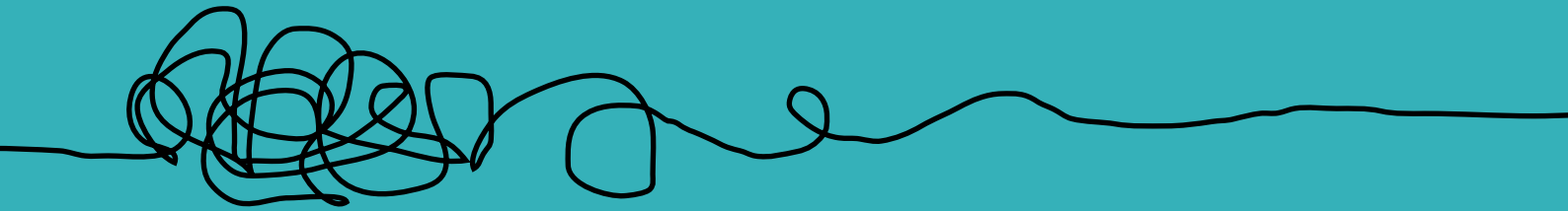
> “Yes, the one-to-one meeting was very useful. I think I probably vented a bit in the meeting which, again, was helpful.”



Having a mediator in the room, makes it easier for the parties to communicate with one another during the joint session.

> It was helpful to have the mediator in the room she gave the mediation a structure and a constructive, safe atmosphere. I thought it was particularly good to have a chance to each say something to the other person without interruption: it allowed us each to set the tone of what we wanted to say and to convey openly how we felt.

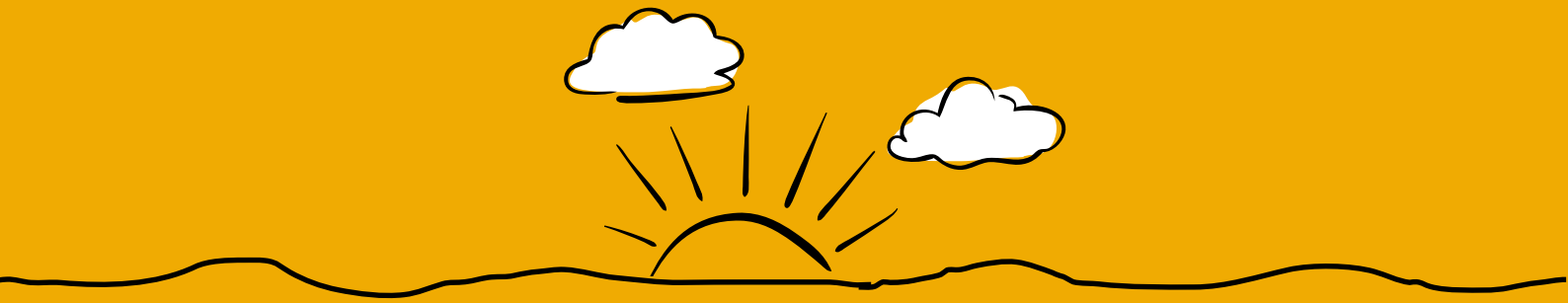
> It felt good to have a completely independent mediator and also be away from work. The mediator was very professional in her approach and, at the same time, positive and cheerful, which also helped.



Mediation can make for some surprising moments...

> “What stands out in my memory is when we left, together, feeling like huge weights had been lifted from our shoulders.”

> “I was surprised by how openly we communicated with one another and how quickly we agreed on things.”



...and make a big difference to people's lives.

"I have regained a friend and colleague, and lost my fear of going into work. Our relationship has changed back to one of collegiality, cooperation and openness. The tension has gone."

"My workplace is now a much happier one and I don't dread going into work in the morning. We now have a very good working relationship. I feel I have gained respect amongst colleagues for tackling the ongoing problem through mediation."



The benefits extend beyond the two people directly involved.

“I think the mediation has indirectly but positively affected our whole department: the atmosphere is easier and morale is higher.”

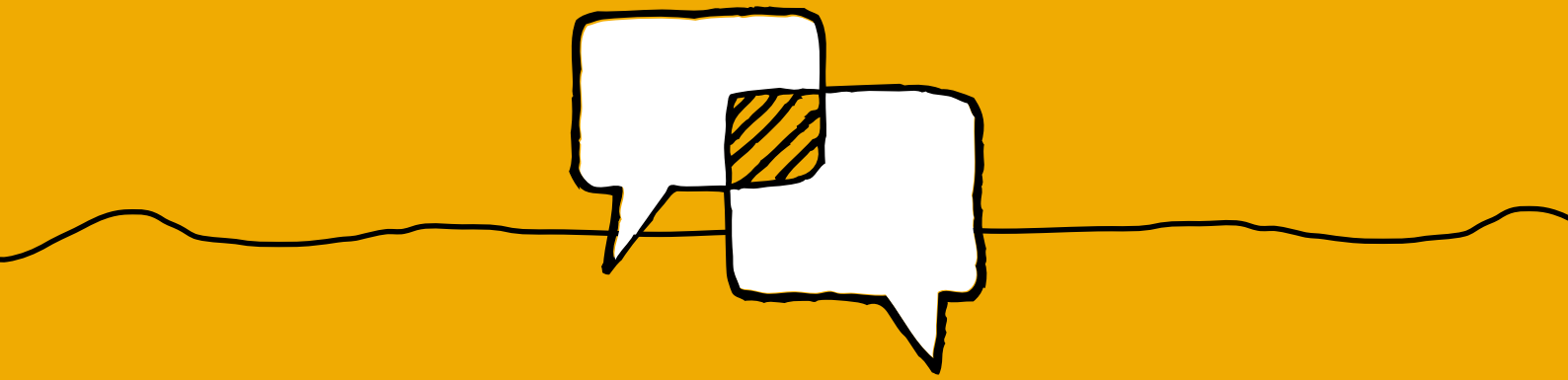
“I agree. I think it has affected all our colleagues in a positive manner.”



Mediation can also bring valuable learning.

> It was a powerful reminder of the importance of clear, honest and open communication.

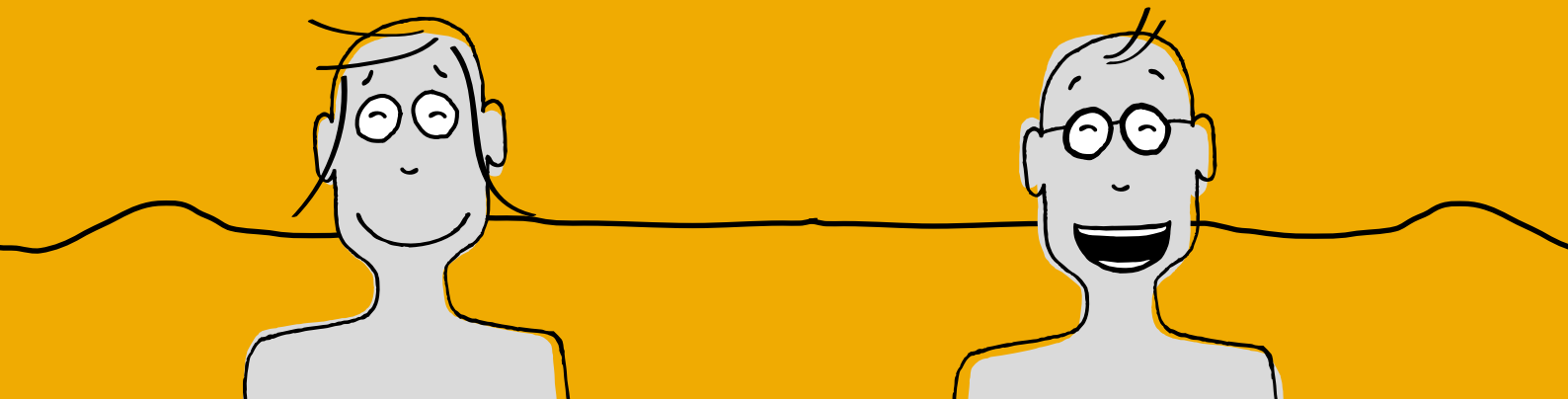
> Yes. Reaching out and talking is always the best way.



Having gone through mediation, people often regret having left it so long...

“We should have done this sooner!”

“Absolutely! We effectively “lost” a year by leaving it for so long.”



...and are keen to encourage others to take up mediation as early as possible.

> “Don’t put it off and don’t wait until things are so difficult that there is no other option. It is a helpful and constructive process and you will feel better for it.”

> “Do it – you have so much to gain and very little to lose.”



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