



'The Mediator's Toolkit: Formulating and Asking Questions for Successful Outcomes'

by Gerry O'Sullivan

Book Review

Gerry O'Sullivan's book on formulating and asking questions will be of enormous value to both new and experienced mediators. She offers us a rare mixture of underlying theoretical concepts combined with practical, thought through examples of different kinds of questions and the uses to which they can be put.

The author outlines her own S Questions Model and sets out a huge range of questioning techniques that can be used as part of a mediator's toolkit. In the first part of the book she draws on theoretical concepts of how the brain processes information, how we communicate (including the Neuro Linguistic Programming Model of Communication), how we distort information and the importance of using language to create the opportunity for a paradigm shift. This section lays the foundation and provides an important backdrop for what is to come: the practical application of the S Questions Model to the mediation process itself in both separate and joint meetings. The latter chapters map out the different components of the S Questions Model which covers questions about *subject matter* to the *structure* of questions, to *seeking information* and *shift thinking*. The author illustrates their application throughout the book with numerous examples and case studies.

For new mediators this book provides an insight not only into types of questions and how to use them in mediation but also the mindset of a mediator who, while remaining impartial and non-judgemental, nonetheless will have occasion to challenge, gently probe and at times empower parties in dispute to show their vulnerability to one another before they can make a shift and move on from their conflict.

For experienced mediators the book provides a great tool with which to reflect on practice and consider their work with new insight. The way the chapters are divided, together with the case studies and the practical tips make it possible for mediators to dip into it and focus on a particular area to develop in their practice.

Gerry O'Sullivan's great experience as a mediator and trainer is highly evident and her voice shines through the whole book. She has made an invaluable contribution to both the theory and practice of mediation.

Dr Lesley Allport