

# INTERGENERATIONAL MEDIATION CASE STUDY



**Mum and Daughter had been having fundamental disagreements about how to move forward in their relationship after decades of hurt and misunderstandings. These deep-seated issues were substantial barriers to a healthy relationship. Mediation was able to support them in building a new relationship based on trust, respect, and communication.**

Daughter felt that Mum had been controlling and dismissive throughout their relationship. She set boundaries around communication because of these tensions. However, Mum felt she did not understand the reason behind this action. Eventually, Daughter felt Mum had broken her boundaries, and they had a falling out, after which they had been calling once a week for a number of months. This limited communication caused Mum significant anxiety, who then approached Family Mediation West.

Both Mum and Daughter agreed that mediation is the next step in addressing their difficulties. Mum wanted a more stable mother-daughter relationship, and felt she needed support to understand Daughter's needs better. Daughter wanted to redefine their relationship, tell her side of the story in a neutral setting, and express her needs for limited contact with a possibility of more contact in the future.

During the first few mediation sessions, Mum and Daughter heard and acknowledged each other's difficult experiences in their relationship thus far. They came to an understanding that they had not been fully aware of each other's feelings throughout their relationship.

With this acceptance of the past, they were able to look to the future. While they understood that decades of difficult communication could not be resolved immediately, they agreed to begin building a relationship based on mutual respect. Daughter agreed to be clearer with her needs moving forward, while Mum agreed to try not to question these needs, and instead respect her autonomy. With these agreements, they felt ready to send each other weekly emails, alternating initiating the contact. This communication pattern began to create stability in their relationship.



At one point in the mediation process, however, there was a backsliding in communication that stoked another conflict. Daughter felt that her boundaries had been disrespected again during their conversations. In response to this conflict, the mediator met with both parties separately to help them re-evaluate their individual priorities and needs from mediation. This conversation empowered both to reframe this conflict as a hiccup in communication rather than a total breakdown. Both parties then voluntarily returned to mediation with a fresh mindset and renewed commitment towards their relationship.

From this point on, they began learning how to communicate in a mutually respectful manner, such as clearly stating when they do not wish to discuss something further and respecting the other party's response. In addition, both parties agreed not to assume the other's intent or emotions, but to use "I" in conversations to effectively convey their feelings to each other. With these healthy communication patterns, both parties were able to build trust in their relationship. In their final session, Mum and Daughter learned how to discuss initiating new developments in their relationship to increase contact at a pace both were comfortable with.

With a shared commitment to mediation and willingness to push through challenging times, Mum and Daughter were able to reflect on their past and most crucially, rebuild their relationship on a foundation of respect and understanding. The lessons they learned from mediation would allow them to gradually strengthen their relationship, even after the mediation process.

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