

Embodied Attunement, Intersubjectivity, and the Musical Edge of Conflict Transformation

IACP 2012 Forum Presentation
Amy H. Martell, presenter

Beneath the words that we share with colleagues and clients, are subtle, nonverbal interactions. This presentation will demonstrate how these nonverbal interactions have musical qualities, and how we can cultivate our abilities to mindfully listen or “attune” to this music, thereby deepening our empathic capacity and our effectiveness as conflict transformation professionals. We will probe the concept of empathy in the context of conflict resolution, using a musically-informed framework for exploring the non-verbal way that we experience and convey intersubjective awareness.

No musical experience or ability is necessary; however, participants will be invited to engage deeply with their ears, bodies and hearts and participate in musically-informed experiences to help illuminate layers of empathic awareness and learn tools for cultivating these abilities.

I. *OPENING – music mediation, mindful listening exercise*

II. *Introduction: context for inquiry.*

- a. Master’s research as a music therapist working with non-verbal children through co-created music. Self-in-relation cultivated through musical experiences; began to consider implications for conflict transformation practice
- b. Asking questions – can empathic resonance, entrainment, attunement, and the non-verbal, musical qualities of these experiences be translated to the mediation world and used both to help professionals improve their abilities and also to deepen the conflict transformation process? Note: This presentation marks a beginning of this inquiry.

III. *Definitions – interactive discussion*

- a. Empathic Resonance
- b. Attunement
- c. Embodied Attunement
- d. Empathy
- e. Intersubjectivity
- f. Entrainment
- g. ***Video Demonstration: Buffy St. Marie on Sesame Street with baby Cody.***

IV. *Brief discussion: Why is empathic/embodied attunement important in conflict transformation?*

- a. *Psychology*: Attachment & intersubjectivity —self psychology, connection between caregiver and infant.
- b. *Spirituality* –“I/Thou”; “Beginner’s Mind”
- c. *Mediation* – “bringing peace into the room”; reflect, reframe nonverbally



- V. **Why Music – Why Empathic Resonance, Embodied Attunement, Entrainment?**
- a. Musical prosody – mother/infant – development of intersubjective awareness
 - b. Music’s affect on the brain – neuroscience, mirror neurons
 - c. How improvisational music is used in therapy – relevance to conflict resolution
 - d. Music in conflict resolution historically, indigenous examples
 - e. Music is fundamentally about relationships
 - f. Where is the music in human interaction and expression? *Rhythm, melody, timbre, dynamics, shape, intensity contours, harmony, breath, percussion, form ...*
 - g. Current research on musical interaction and improved empathy responses in children
 - h. Importance of working in the non-verbal realm and developing our non-verbal awareness and capacities
 - i. Easy to get stuck in the verbal realm –
 - ii. Focusing on non-verbal realm allows professional to more information
 - iii. Modeling
 - iv. Resolving impasse, conflict transformation
 - i. **Exercise: Examples**
 1. *Mirror-matching*
 2. *Rhythm entrainment*
 3. *Intensity contours conversation*
 4. *Entrainment or intentional mismatching*

VI. **Exercise: putting it all together.**

VII. **CLOSING – group experiential**, ideas for the future, including other potential uses for music in conflict resolution

*O Music
In your depths we deposit our hearts and souls
Thou hast taught us to see with our ears
And hear with our hearts.*

-- Khalil Gibran

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: Amy H. Martell brings a meandering history of experience to her conflict resolution practice, including two years of service as a judicial law clerk to the Massachusetts Probate and Family Courts, a prior career as a music teacher and music therapist, and a stint as bartender at No. 9 Park, one of Boston’s finest restaurants. As a music therapist, Amy centered her research and practice on using improvised, co-created music with nonverbal children to help them cultivate their interpersonal self-development. Amy completed her basic Interdisciplinary Collaborative training in 2009 and has participated in a number of mediation and advanced collaborative trainings and two IACP conferences. In late 2011, Amy stopped taking litigated cases and opened Whole Family Law and Mediation, a collaborative practice and mediation firm committed to helping families resolve and prevent conflict mindfully and creatively. Amy is a member of the board of directors of the Massachusetts Collaborative Law Council and a founding leader of her local practice group.

Additional materials may be distributed at the presentation; these will be available after the forum at www.wholefamilylaw.com/presentation-materials. Please feel free to send feedback and ideas to me at the email address below. Thank you!



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Bibliography and Resource List

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