

I Can Relate!

The monthly missalette on Relational Practice
Louise Phipps Senft

We face a crisis of well-being in the legal system which causes great suffering in society and throughout the legal profession. That may be why many of us have chosen to shift our legal work to dispute resolution. But even for dispute resolvers, we still face seemingly insurmountable adversarial obstacles, all of which takes a toll on well-being. If this resonates for you, then you may be very interested in a response that fosters a paradigm shift from what I call a Transactional Ethic to a *Relational Ethic*.

Choosing to Be Relational™ empowers lawyers to move beyond the adversarial ethos. Even when you are *not* mediating or otherwise engaged in alternative dispute resolution, choosing to Be Relational™ on a daily basis in client counselling, negotiation and interaction gives lawyers a framework to be effective in more expansive ways; to be more human in decent ways, to advocate in ways that are good for themselves, their clients and the other side. Relational practices not only improve the quality of interactions (especially difficult ones), but they create well-being.

This month kicks off the ABA's first annual Relational Practices Task Force Virtual Summit. The first Virtual Summit for the ABA Section of Dispute Resolution. You can access the 21 recorded sessions exploring and sharing what it means to practice relationally with specific how to's for what relational practices look like and sound like as well as deeper look at a relational mindset in both dispute resolution and litigation and transactional legal practice. Whether a mediator, arbitrator, litigator or contract negotiator, the big picture is becoming more aware of the choice to be relational in a highly transactional world or not. You will be riveted by the collection of scholarship and thought, over 7 hours of content, broken up in bite size segments of 6 minutes to 45 minutes.

We welcome you to the relational practices movement! Together we will look at the unintended consequences of the adversarial ethic, take a stand for a more relational way of being, and support each other and the shift in practice- in thought, word and action.

Louise Phipps Senft is a Chair of the Relational Practices Task Force and author of the best-seller, *Being Relational: The Seven Ways to Quality Interaction and Lasting Change* (HCI 2015). She is the founder of *Baltimore Mediation* (1993) and is an international mediator with a practice in catastrophic injury and complex business, divorce, and estate conflict. She is a nationally recognized trainer in relational theory and practice and transformative mediation.