



THE HIDDEN COSTS
OF AVOIDANCE: WHY
FAMILIES NEED
MEDIATION

UPCOMING
EVENTS

SAVE THE DATES



Sweet Basil
Senior Care

PROVIDER
SPOTLIGHT:
Sweet Basil Senior
Care, LLC



SHOUT OUT: DISPUTE
RESOLUTION CENTER

Still Waters Mediation

Newsletter



Greetings from Still Waters!

I'm delighted to share the exciting opportunities and upcoming events happening in the next few months. It's a true privilege to partner with some of my favorite professionals and organizations, all dedicated to supporting families, caregivers, and seniors in our community.

Alongside a range of conferences and workshops, I'll also be working closely with fellow mediators to exchange ideas, refine best practices, and continue growing our expertise in mediation. There's so much happening, and I can't wait to connect with you!

Please feel free to explore and share the event links below, register to participate, or reach out to me directly if you'd like more information. Here are just a few of the events ahead:

Upcoming Events at a glance

October 15th
Caring Conversations:
A Dementia Caregivers Forum
[https://www.thewaters.com/locations/
the-waters-kingsley-shores/events/
details/caring-conversations-a-
dementia-caregivers-forum/](https://www.thewaters.com/locations/the-waters-kingsley-shores/events/details/caring-conversations-a-dementia-caregivers-forum/)

October 31st
MN CLE ADR Institute
[https://www.minnclc.org/seminar/
1050842601](https://www.minnclc.org/seminar/1050842601)

November 1
CaregiverCon
<https://www.caregivercon.com/>

November 13th
Peace of Mind Planning: How
to talk with your family about
your estate plan
Gilda's Club Minnesota:
[https://gildasclubmn.org/find-support/
clubhouse-programs/](https://gildasclubmn.org/find-support/clubhouse-programs/)

November 18th & 19th
Community Mediation
Minnesota: Elder Mediation
Training:
[https://communitymediationmn.org/
events/](https://communitymediationmn.org/events/)

On October 15th, I will participate in the third Dementia Forum in a four-part series offered by The Waters Senior Living. **Caring Conversations** will be held from 6-8 pm at **The Waters of Kingsley Shores** in Lakeville. I previously took part in another installment of this series and was deeply moved by the connections I made with residents and their family members. My biggest takeaway: creating a space for people to discuss their shared experiences with dementia caregiving is incredibly important. I look forward to joining the community again on the 15th to serve as a resource for caregivers, offering guidance on how to communicate with loved ones, navigate family relationships, and manage conflicts related to their loved ones' journey.

<https://www.thewaters.com/locations/the-waters-kingsley-shores/events/details/caring-conversations-a-dementia-caregivers-forum/>

The **2025 ADR Institute** will take place on **October 31st** and will be hosted by MN Continuing Legal Education. I am honored to serve on the faculty this year as the moderator for "How to Build and Sustain a Successful ADR Practice: A Panel Discussion." I look forward to seeing my fellow Alternative Dispute Resolution professionals there!

<https://www.minnCLE.org/seminar/2550842601>

The following day, **November 1st**, will be filled with community, connection, and camaraderie at **Jack's Caregiver Coalition's CaregiverCON**. CaregiverCON 2025 is the premier event for family caregivers and the organizations that support them. I am looking forward to a day of inspiring keynotes, hands-on workshops, and meaningful networking opportunities. Whether you're a caregiver, advocate, or service provider, I encourage you to join us! You'll leave equipped with practical tools and renewed energy to make a difference—every day of the year.

<https://www.caregivercon.com/>



Provider Spotlight: Ann Olson, Sweet Basil Senior Care

Minneapolis-based occupational therapist, Ann Olson, is proud to announce the publication of her book, *Making Peace with Dementia*. This book isn't just a collection of tips; it's filled with real-life stories, strategies and insights gathered over a lifetime of working with families and caregivers. Ann hopes this book will find its way into the hands of those who need it most. If you're feeling lost, overwhelmed, or simply in need of support on your caregiving journey, this easy-to-read guide helps readers find new confidence and the peace they deserve. One reviewer says, "It feels like a supportive friend is sitting beside you, listening and understanding." <https://a.co/d/7F82Byf>

To inquire about speaking, family coaching or group training or to learn more about Ann, please visit www.sweetbasilcare.com



Why I Love the DRC: And so should you!

The Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) in St. Paul is Minnesota's oldest community mediation program. DRC was founded in 1982 as a pilot project co-sponsored by the Ramsey County Bar Association, the City of Saint Paul, and the Minnesota Supreme Court.

DRC offers mediation, restorative justice, and conflict resolution services for individuals and communities. They assist with landlord-tenant issues, small claims, neighborhood disputes, and workplace conflicts. DRC also features restorative justice programs that bring together those who have caused harm with those affected, focusing on accountability and healing, especially for youth. Additionally, they conduct youth development circles and provide training in mediation and restorative practices for schools, businesses, and community organizations. Their services are affordable, using a sliding fee scale to ensure accessibility for all.

I began volunteering for the Dispute Resolution Center in 2024 as a mediator. Since then, I have gained not only mediation skills but also a wonderful community of fellow mediators and friends. As a Qualified Neutral under Rule 114, I am able to sign up to mediate Ramsey County Courts cases. Volunteering options are so flexible, as little as one morning a month, or more frequently as my schedule allows. I also occasionally mediate community cases.

I highly recommend getting involved with the DRC, as a volunteer neutral or in financial support, to support their mission to restore community and promote peace. To learn more, visit: <https://www.disputeresolutioncenter.org/>

The Hidden Costs of Avoidance: Why Families Need Mediated Conversations

Molly Darsow, Owner and Mediator

In many families, the toughest conversations are the ones we tend to avoid. Questions like: Where will Mom live as she gets older and needs extra care? Who should make health care decisions for her? How will Dad's estate be divided? These topics can be overwhelming, so it's easier to put them aside for another day.

But avoidance works like a slow leak in a boat. At first, it doesn't seem like a big deal—the water rises so slowly, no one really notices. Given time, though, the leak grows dangerous. Resentment can build, siblings may stop talking, and what started as silence can turn into open conflict that damages a family's sense of trust.

Why Avoidance Makes Things Worse

The evidence is clear: unresolved conflict rarely fades away—it tends to grow over time. According to the American Psychological Association, avoidance often increases stress and damages relationships more than facing issues directly.¹ Studies on end-of-life planning show that delaying discussions about care and estate planning makes families more likely to have fractured relationships and battles in probate court.² In other words, the short-term comfort of silence often leads to long-term pain: legal headaches, strained finances, and deep family rifts. (Cont'd)

How Mediation Can Help

Mediation provides a safe, structured space where families can voice concerns before they become entrenched disputes. A neutral mediator helps everyone feel heard, clarifies misunderstandings, and guides families toward practical decisions they can agree on.

Families who try mediation often find:

- Relief in finally voicing the things left unsaid
- Stronger relationships
- Less stress, fewer surprises, and a clearer path forward

As one client shared, “It wasn’t easy, but it was better than years of silence.” Guided conversations like these fix the leak before the boat starts to sink.

Why Attorneys Suggest Mediation

Attorneys often see family avoidance as delay or indecision, simmering just beneath the surface—until it spills into court. Once litigation starts, costs rise, delays grow, and often nobody is fully satisfied.

Recommending mediation early can:

- Resolve issues before court becomes necessary
- Preserve family relationships, which matter more in the long run than winning a case
- Protect clients’ finances and emotional well-being

The American Bar Association’s Section of Dispute Resolution has found that mediation resolves many probate and elder law disputes more efficiently than going to court, and it helps maintain family ties that would otherwise be lost.³

Facing Challenges Together

Every family runs into rough waters now and then. While avoidance might keep things calm for a while, the hidden costs will keep growing. Whether you’re a family member dreading the big talk, or an attorney helping clients, mediation offers a way to tackle these leaks early, before they become unmanageable.

Families deserve lasting solutions—not patchwork fixes. A mediated conversation today can prevent years of silence, conflict, and expensive legal battles.

¹ American Psychological Association. “Stress in America: Coping with Change.” 2017. ² Institute of Medicine. Dying in America: Improving Quality and Honoring Individual Preferences Near the End of Life. National Academies Press, 2015.

³ American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution. “Elder Care Mediation: A New Way to Make Decisions Together.” 2019.

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