



SOCIAL JUSTICE ASSOCIATION
APPROPRIATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PRACTITIONERS



April 2025
Issue 4

From Courtroom Clashes to Constructive Resolution: *The Quiet Revolution of Project 94*

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Why the change?

In a country where courtroom battles have too often felt like the only path to justice, a quieter revolution has been unfolding - one that could reshape how South Africans resolve disputes. It's called Project 94, and it started with a simple but powerful question: Is there a better way?

Gauteng Judge President, Dustin Mlambo in an interview with #Newzroom Africa highlighted: “What needs to change is something that should have probably changed a some time ago. When the legislature were fit to include Rule 41A in the Rules of Court, I would say that the Attorneys should have taken that Rule seriously, because that's the rule that introduced mediation and it is compulsory for any party that initiates action in the High Court, that accompanying their summons or application, notice of application, there's got to be a notice to the other side to say, are they prepared to go to mediation or are they opposed to it, and importantly that rule says if any part is opposed to mediation it must set out full reasons why it is opposed to do so, but as I said the attorneys have not taken this rule seriously... they simply file that notice without factoring what it intends to do... So those matters simply come here without the parties having even tried

to mediate their disputes.”

Watch the recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5Gmkzfu8gA>

So the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) rolled up its sleeves, drafted Discussion Paper 168 and offers in Project 94 (Clause 2 – Objectives of the Draft Mediation Bill) to:

- minimise citizen frustration and delays in justice delivery by providing standard legal framework for fair & efficient settlement of disputes through mediation;
- promote & encourage mediation as appropriate method of dispute resolution;
- afford parties opportunity to resolve disputes expeditiously & cost-effectively;
- provide for regulation of mediator profession;
- provide for regulation of procedure for referral of disputes to mediation;
- direct mediation process;
- provide for enforcement of international commercial mediation settlement agreements under Singapore Convention.

Will all mediations be mandatory?

The Bill empowers the Courts to refer cases to mediation and introduces mandatory mediation only in specific

categories of disputes listed in the proposed Clauses 29 and 30: insurance; medical negligence; professional negligence; defended loan default; construction contracts; personal injury claims from MVA disputes; and defamation disputes.

What more is being investigated in Discussion Paper 168?

- Civil, commercial and community mediation;
- Separate investigation: Project 100A Family Dispute Resolution (Approved by SALRC 13 December 2024) to develop Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Report and to consider implementation of Family Dispute Resolution Bill;
- Project 151 - Review of Criminal Justice System / Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) for mediation in criminal matters

It's not flashy. It doesn't make headlines. But Project 94 might just be the key to unlocking faster, fairer, and more accessible justice - outside of the courtroom chaos.

Change doesn't always bang a gavel. Sometimes, it whispers from a commission's office, quietly rewriting the rules for a more balanced future.

- *The Editor*, Attorney and Certified Mediator



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6th Annual conference - 10 & 11 September 2025



SAVE THE DATE: 10 & 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

Conference Theme: Integrated Approaches to ADR

SOCIAL JUSTICE ADR CONFERENCE
IN COLLABORATION WITH UCT FACULTY OF LAW DEPARTMENT COMMERCIAL LAW



064 800 3975



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We are thrilled to announce our 6th Annual Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) conference hosted by **Social Justice Foundation** and **Social Justice Association of Appropriate Dispute Resolution Practitioners** in collaboration with the esteemed **UCT Faculty of Law Department**.

This year's two-day upcoming conference will delve into the cutting-edge field of Integrated Approaches to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and provide leading experts - ADR practitioners, Mediators, Judges, Advocates, Attorneys, Lecturers, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Government representatives with the opportunity - to share and expand their knowledge, enhance skills and contribute to the advancement of ADR practices.

Join us for an insightful and engaging conference exploring the latest developments, best practices, and innovative strategies in integrating mediation with other ADR practices.

Upcoming Webinars & Training Events

Dates to remember
Free & CPD Training

- ◆ 22 April 2025 (18h00) - Heidi Joubert & Natasja Rowe: Child participation <https://forms.gle/fvCCCJREwpES4pDn8>
- ◆ 23 April 2025 (09h00) - Laurie Greyvenstein: Credit Bureau Dispute Resolution <https://forms.gle/6gZsZBAe7kZfnoWf7>
- ◆ 24 April 2025 (18h00) - Karen Malan: Processes and Documents in the Children's Court: A practical Guide <https://forms.gle/XLozdm3NmT6p3pkF6>
- ◆ 6 May 2025 (18h00) - Rosa Orpen: How coaching techniques enhances mediation <https://forms.gle/m24XEdaK8g1JgbD56>
- ◆ 15 May 2025 (10h00) - Dr Fikile Mnisi: Mental Health Basics: Identification and Application in Mediation <https://forms.gle/ZpVqEX2o4hEWJXMaA>
- ◆ 20 May 2025 (18h00) - Hinda Mendelow: Jewish Family Law and Divorce <https://forms.gle/MMYe462yYup226TQ6>
- ◆ 17 June 2025 (18h00) - Dr Lynette Roux: ADRP-SA - draft of the Standards and Ethics for Mediators <https://forms.gle/QVVQkKv5QoPZMh6f8>
- ◆ 25 June 2025 (09h00) - Laurie Greyvenstein: Credit Bureau Dispute Resolution <https://forms.gle/6gZsZBAe7kZfnoWf7>
- ◆ 10 July 2025 (18h00) - George Warrington: Labour Mediation
- ◆ Monthly Family Law Round-Up - Merwyn Vermeulen: 2 May 2025; 6 June 2025; 4 July 2025; 1 Aug 2025.

Care over Conflict

- The Impact of Divorce and Custody Assessments on Children



Effects of high conflict divorce on Children

Although it is well-established in research, it is worth emphasising that the single most detrimental factor to children's mental health is exposure to conflict between their parents. This is often mistakenly conflated automatically with a divorce process.

While children can certainly experience temporary anxiety in response to changes in their routine and living circumstances as a result of a divorce and also experience an understandable grief process regarding loss of contact with both parents and a previous way of life, if a divorce occurs in an amiable and structured manner, these negative effects can be minimal and temporary elements of adjustment (Drozd et al., 2016); Stahl, 2013).

An amiable divorce characterised by facilitating contact between the children and parents, presenting a unified front on parenting decisions and a prioritisation of the children's best needs can be minimally detrimental to children in the short-term and inconsequential in the long-term (Coates, 2015; Stewart, 2018).

By contrast, an acrimonious divorce in which parents restrict phone contact, visitation and/or argue in front of the child, at best, or recruit the child in a campaign of hatred against the other parent (referred to in psychological literature as alienation), at worst, can have severe and long-standing effects on children. Conflict, not necessarily divorce, is revealed in the data to be the injurious factor to be minimised through ef-

fective mediation and intervention (DiFonzo, 2015; Themistocleous-Rothner, 2017).

Given the above research findings it would appear that all attempts should be made to facilitate a divorce process that is as amicable as possible. Ignoring this option can lead to, *inter alia*, many of the following negative effects experienced by children:

- anxiety,
- depression,
- poor reality testing,
- impaired academic performance,
- illogical cognitive functioning (such as simplistic and rigid information processing),
- inaccurate or distorted interpersonal perceptions resulting in poor peer and romantic relationships,
- intense self-hatred,
- low self-esteem (due to internalised negative parts of rejected parent, self-doubt about own perceptions,
- self-blame for rejecting parent or abandoning siblings,
- mistrust,
- feeling unworthy or unloved,
- self-abandoned,
- inflated self-esteem or omnipotence (often associated with narcissism, parentified behaviours and over-responsibility),
- co-dependency in adult relationships,
- aggression and delinquency,
- poor impulse control, emotional dependency,
- increased risk of substance addiction,
- lack of remorse or guilt.

Given the varied and immensely consequential nature of these psychological consequences, it is common cause that a preferential urgent and effective intervention, such as a psychological investi-

gation, should be employed in the service of the best interests of children (Austin et al., 2013; Demby, 2017; Themistocleous-Rothner, 2017).

Differences between investigation and litigation

Moreover, aside from the conflict between the parents in a high conflict divorce, it is worth considering a different form of tension that may emerge between other parties in the broader context; namely assessing mental health professionals (MHP) and attorneys. This tension, if brought to a head, can become another battleground that causes more ripples of acrimony rather than stabilising the system (Coates, 2015). In some cases, this tension is inevitable as the attorney and MHP (typically a psychologist) operate from vastly different paradigms. According to Snyders (2003), an attorney operates from a legal paradigm which places the attorney in a role that is focussed on the dichotomy of objective truth and falsity (as a finder of fact) and in an adversarial position in which the narrative of their client (a mother or father) is prioritised.

By nature, this position creates a zero-sum outcome in which the interests of one party are achieved at the expense of the other. The psychologist, however, operates from a more ecological paradigm characterised by multiple, overlapping versions of reality with a high degree of epistemological relativism that results in a description of the dynamics in the family going through a divorce. Since assessments can often serve as a constructive intervention to limit conflict and chaos between parents, rather than perpetuate it, a congruent focus



between attorneys and MHP needs to be approximated so that any outcome attends to the best interests of the children irrespective of the contesting needs of the parties, or the tension between the MHP and the instructing attorneys.

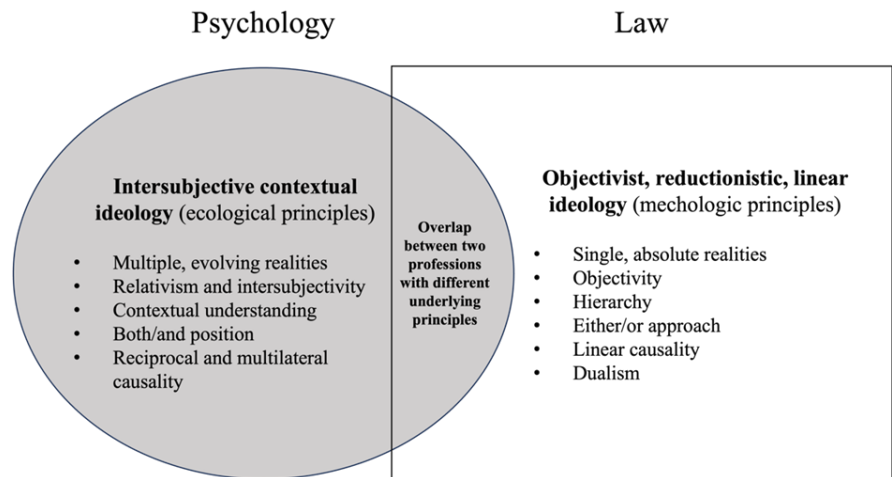
Notwithstanding that the selective commitments of an attorney to the cause of a client (zero-sum) and the psychologist, who should be attempting to maintain an objective and balanced perspective in providing a holistic analysis that is not rooted in either parties narrative, may seem incompatible at first glance (Demby, 2017), it is possible for the two roles to be complementary rather than contradictory (Allan, 2016).

The most useful means by which this is accomplished is by the attorneys and psychologists involved uniting on the one factor common to them: the best interests of the children. Such a focus with an emphasis on a psychological description, by way of an assessment, may well serve as a prophylaxis against the adversarial, potentially conflict-perpetuating zero-sum stance that attorneys are moved to adopt. Moreover, when all professionals consider that this allows for useful counterbalances of each perspective by the other, it becomes clear that this dialogue can be used to strengthen confidence in any decision ultimately made by the court.

Some of the benefits of an assessment in preference to litigation without an assessment.

Although it is specifically indicated in the Children's Act No.38 of 2005 that the voice of the child be included in any assessment of what would serve the best interests of the child, there are many instances where, because of the nature of litigation and the focus on a zero-sum outcome, legal proceedings may not focus on the child's participation. However, from the point of view of care rather than conflict, the use of psychological assessments and investigations certainly make provision for a more inclusive description of the family going through a divorce and more specifically the position of the child in that family.

One of the verbalised concerns regarding the employment of an assessment is that the effects can be detri-



Note. Adapted from “Mechologic and ecologic: Blueprints for war and peace by R. Snyders, 2003, *Language Matters*, 34(1), 80–85. Copyright 2003 by Taylor and Francis

mental for the children undergoing the psychological investigation. Of course, if the process of assessing the children replicates the conflict between the parents and is conducted within a zero-sum paradigm as described above, it certainly can exacerbate the negative effects for the children.

However, if the MHP attends to the assessment as an opportunity to gain a double-description (Themistocleous-Rothner, 2017) of the child's view of the world and what the current manifest dynamic is in the family, the assessment may be quite benign for the child, if not positive and affirming. In the service of this, the child should be fully informed by both parents, and this should be reiterated by the MHP, that the investigator is not an agent for either parent and that the assessment is designed solely for the benefit of the child.

The methodology employed by the MHP should be engaged, fun, interested, and pitched at the appropriate level for the child. Any resemblance to an inquisitor or finder of fact should be avoided at all costs. MHPs also have many tools at their disposal to gain a nuanced understanding of the world of the child. These include stimulus material and projective techniques that present as fun and arouse the child's curiosity. Interviews should not include direct questioning unless tracking a spontaneous verbalisation by a child.

In fact, if properly conducted the assessment can have the very positive

effect of leaving the child who enters the assessment process as having been heard. According to Walker (2013, p.1) there is a concern that children may be “being denied a right that should belong to everyone who enters the legal system: to have an equal opportunity not only to understand the language of proceedings, but to *be understood*.” An assessment presents an opportunity to rectify this potential concern.

A properly conducted child assessment will result in a reflection of the ‘voice of the child’. This does not mean literally the child's voice - the *verba ipsissima* (precise words) – narrated by the child nor that the ‘voice’ becomes the only choice. Ideally at the end of a nuanced and sensitive full assessment of the family and specifically the child, the child's world view, concerns, understandings and needs can be factored into a description that allows the family ultimately to heal and recalibrate healthily around their new structure. In this, the assessment report rendered should act as a therapeutic intervention that promotes psychological health for all the members of the family generating care rather than conflict.

- *Dr. Robyn Fasser (Clinical Psychologist) & Dr. Anthony Townsend (Clinical Psychologist)*



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Non-Accredited / Lapsed Accreditation - Refresher Course

"No Problem!" - If you are not accredited yet, or your accreditation lapsed we can assist!

Accredited family mediators sometimes allow their accreditation to lapse. NABFAM has resolved a reaccreditation process for trained mediators whose accreditations have lapsed, and those persons who trained more than two years ago but have not completed their accreditation yet. All members who have not renewed their accreditation by 28 February 2023 must first complete the reaccreditation course before their accreditation will be renewed. Doing this course is NOT a punishment but a valuable opportunity to get up to speed with the latest developments in divorce & family mediation.

NABFAM resolved that Prof Leentjie de Jong's course must be completed before the reaccreditation of such members. The course includes a summary of family mediation principles and an update on the latest developments in family mediation. The course can be done at **Social Justice**, it is available on the online training platform, and it can be done in your own time. The cost of the reaccreditation training course is R500 plus VAT.

Register here:

<https://forms.gle/9PGH1Vr97gk1VvUB6>

Visit our websites for more details:

www.socialjustice.org.za &
www.socialjustice.co.za



Prof Leentjie de Jong



Social Justice
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The 3 Rs – Essentials in Conflict Resolution (Part 2 of 2) - Climate, Collaboration and Creative Solutions



In the previous Newsletter, December 2024 Issue, I dealt with *Essentials in Conflict Resolution The 3 Rs – Respect, Recognition and Relatedness*. We looked at how to create a positive climate that assists with both conflict resolution and creative problem-solving. We identified Positive and Negative Behaviours that promote – or undermine – an innovative and solution-sharing climate. In this article we will delve deeper into conflict management, and how climate and positive behaviours relate to leadership, culture, inclusivity and neuroscience. In a third article, I will add to the original three R's, two more Rs – Responsibility and Resilience, and show how all this relates to operational and creative thinking, and to constructive development of novel ideas into action plans.

The 3 Rs - Climate, Collaboration and Creative Solutions

If we are to build a climate in which people can achieve goals and success through the collaboration and the creativity that current challenges demand, it is essential that leaders ensure that their approach inspires and enables active involvement. Sadly, there seems to be a current trend world-wide where many leaders in both politics and business are reverting to power-driven, transactional and dominant styles – which disempower and demotivate people, and increase levels of conflict all around us. As we have seen, such hubris and forceful action can be destructive – so in our own work and personal environments we need to create a culture where people feel emotionally safe enough to achieve and grow.

Leadership styles linked to climate and culture

In the past, leadership styles mostly tended to be individualistic, rational, hierarchical, competitive, strongly power- and goal-oriented, focused, and generally **forceful and directive**. This is where structure, hierarchy and power, and directiveness is used to ensure efficiency and action. In academic literature this has been identified as a masculine style.

To steer organisations through changes and challenges in the environment, many leaders have gained the insight that they also needed to become more concerned about others, flexible, adaptable, intuitive, innovative, open-minded, aware of “the big picture” – more **thoughtful and responsive**. This has been called the feminine style – although many men who are highly effective leaders, or “servant leaders,” tend to use this style. These styles also tend to vary between countries and cultures. For example, the more participative, democratic style is more common in Scandinavian countries than in the USA and Germany. In South Africa we need a mix of the two styles, to ensure both efficiency, and engagement of our very diverse workforce.

Leadership styles linked to climate

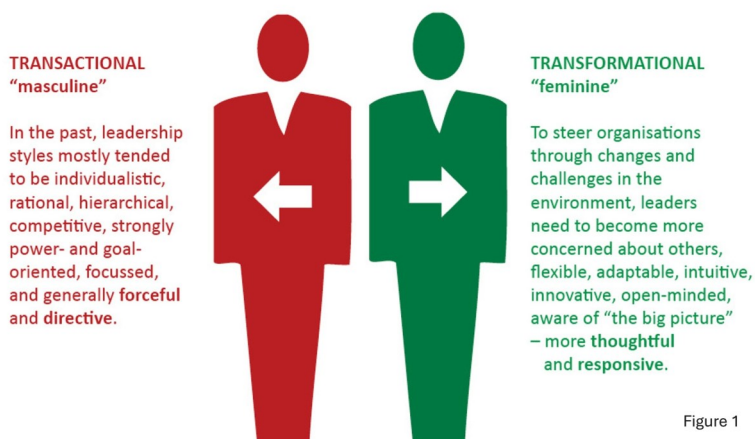


Figure 1

Figure 1 Leadership styles linked to Climate

In recent decades, workforces and individuals have become more diverse, and more aware of their rights. This requires the “leader as master” to also become “leader as colleague.” Many “transformational” leaders have adopted a more open, egalitarian and participative style. They realise they need to be more collaborative, supportive and aware of relationships and feelings. This wider spectrum of attributes and behaviours empowers both leaders and followers to function more effectively. The positive “green” behaviours mentioned in the first article are a valuable tool to help leaders and others to move from the traditional, transactional, hierarchical, more authoritarian “red behaviours,” to establish a climate that promotes innovative planning and collaborative problem-solving. (For downloadable diagrams of these behaviours, please see www.synnovation.co.za/

Headlines.)

Internationally and in South Africa, we all look up to leaders who have achieved success in their companies or other organisations by introducing new, more participative, flexible approaches. Exceptional political and church leaders like Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu are also examples of the power of openness and “positive behaviours” based on respect, recognition and relatedness – or of “the Ubuntu culture”.

How to create a supportive climate that creates trust and space for agreement

In many workgroups, people are competitive, shoot down one another’s ideas, or “play devil’s advocate.” Challenging others’

ideas is part of business culture in many organisations. Some see this as the best way to test an idea. “If you can’t shoot it down, it must be a good idea.” However, this often results in more energy and time going into point-scoring and protecting turf, than into creating novel solutions, and reaching agreement on workable action plans.

A key ground rule that helps to create a supportive climate is “Assume positive intent.” A secretary phoned us after her company’s top managers had attended a strategy and conflict management workshop. “What have you done to the guys?” “What’s wrong?” “No, what’s right! They’re no longer shouting at each other – they’re talking to each other!” In the workshop, they discovered new ways of relating and working together. Assume positive intent helps to build trust. Usually, we don’t know whether others mean what they say or do positively, or negatively. Unsure, particularly when we suggest new or untested ideas, or if the climate is conflictual, we easily become defensive and counter-attack, shoot down the other person’s next idea; or else we withdraw. So, the relationship spirals downwards. If we assume others’ intention is positive (give them the benefit of the doubt, or “turn the other cheek”), the effect on us, and thus our response, can become positive. Thus we build co-operative relationships, or an “upwards spiral.” Although this may seem a bit optimistic or naïve, it is amazingly effective.

The positive “green” behaviours in the first article are very similar to the behaviours suggested in recent decades, in terms of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2006), and subsequently also in terms of Social and Cultural Intelligence, as shown in **Figure 2**, and to the traditional African Ubuntu culture. These are also the behaviours prescribed (but sadly not always practised consistently) by many religions all over the world. At the same time, they link to “The Three Rs” of Respect, Recognition and Relatedness.

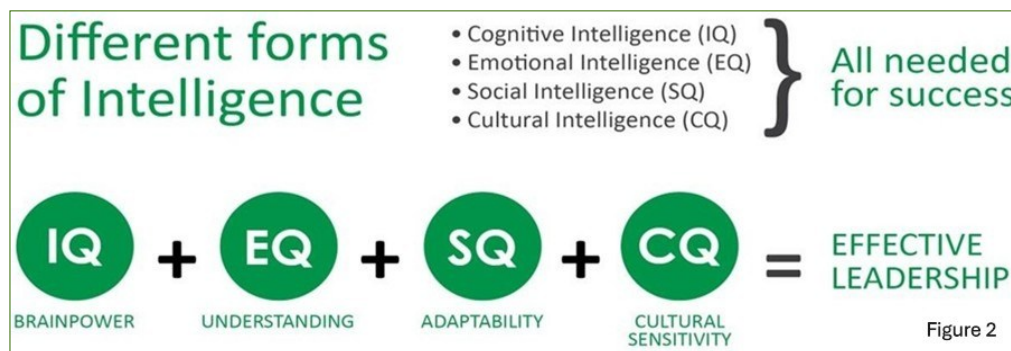


Figure 2

Four Different forms of Intelligence – Linked to positive behaviours

Note. Adapted from an unpublished presentation by Lize Booysen.

Positive behaviours usually “bring out the best in people” because they help to build self-confidence, engagement and a sense of belonging. “Red,” more directive behaviours – when needed, for example in times of crisis or under-performance – are more effective and have the most impact when they are used sparingly and fairly, and when a positive climate has been built by respectful interactions and green behaviours in everyday relationships.

Linking this to Neuroscience – and to finding shared solutions to conflict

The lasting results and effectiveness of the Synectics and SynNovation principles, process and practical tools to create a solution-minded climate and managing conflict, can be explained by neuroscience (Rock, 2008, 2009). Behaviours, ground rules and facilitation that create a positive climate, clarity in roles and process, a variety of fun group activities, recognition and reward of ideas, even informal seating and healthy “brainfood” provided during workshops or meetings, all enhance a positive experience or “well-being” in participants, and release positive neuro-transmitters. This encourages participants to use the positive behaviours and tools afterwards. Thus it also enhances “durability” of change.

The organising principle of the brain is to minimise threats and to maximise reward. Chemical messengers – neurotransmitters – let the brain know if it is receiving “good news or bad news”, and then activates specific parts of the brain. The reward response is transmitted by dopamine to stimulate the nucleus accumbens (NA).

Key neuro-transmitters include Serotonin (mood, sleep, appetite), Dopamine (DA) (interest, gratification) and Noradrenaline/Norepinephrine (NE) (alertness). Fear (real or imagined, in work or nature, life-threatening or emotional) releases NE, triggers the amygdala and induces stress. Under stress or conflict conditions serotonin and DA drop, and NE increases and stimulates the amygdala. While feelings like fear, anxiety, and anger trigger the amygdala – the nucleus accumbens is associated with feelings of interest and gratification. However, activation of the nucleus accumbens can suppress the amygdala, and vice versa.

In many companies, or if individuals are faced with a big problem or conflict, people may experience the climate as threatening, with feelings of fear or anxiety for some, or most, of the time. In simple terms the SynNovation ground rules, used to create a positive climate, can reduce the “threat” response by reducing fears in several ways. At the same time, thinking tools and fun activities are likely to increase dopamine production to stimulate the NA, the brain’s “pleasure centre” associated with psychological well-being. The more dopamine release activates the NA, the more the amygdala is suppressed, reducing fears.

Managing fear and enhancing pleasure has an added side benefit – it ensures that the neurochemicals are at “just the right” levels for peak performance. **Table 1** shows the key conditions required for effective brain functioning, with strategies that Rock (2009) proposes to manage these, and tools and principles SynNovation and Synectics use to manage these.

Table 1 Managing optimal neurochemistry for performance and problem-solving – Achieving David Rock’s strategies by using SynNovation tools and principles

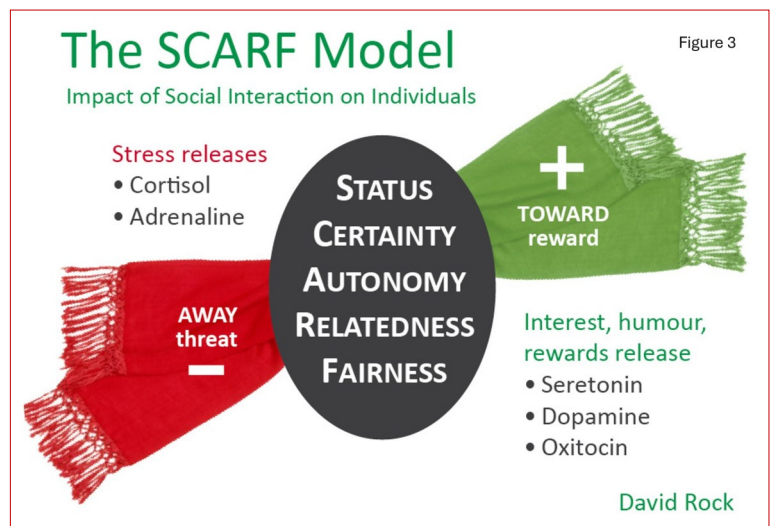
Note. Credit for below overview and table: Lu-Marie Sobey

Required for Effective brainfunctioning	David Rockstrategies	SynNovation tools that help to meetrequirements
Reduce ANXIETY	Reduce information in prefrontal cortex Activate other parts of brain	Structure of process Practical tools and steps All ideas are captured, verbatim All senses are involved in various “excursions”and tools
Increase ALERT-NESS Noradrenaline, Norepinephrine	Create urgency Visualise and verbalise the “scary”	Tight time limits to solve problems (10 – 60 min.) Target to generate many ideas Clear Task Statement Listening for ideas Clearly stating, recording and building on ideas
Increase INTEREST, GRATIFICATION Dopamine	Novelty Humour Changing perspectives	Expectation for newness, surprise, AHA! Humour in sharing connections or triggers to thoughts, variety of triggers Walking around during “excursions” Changing roles, using different techniques

The SCARF Model

David Rock (2008), has developed the “SCARF Model” (Figure 3) in which he identified five main social dimensions that are essential for our effective functioning: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness. If we feel these needs are met, we feel rewarded, move “toward” the situation, and our brains function well. If we feel short-changed or threatened in terms of social interactions affecting one or more of these – the negative chemicals, emotions and behaviours come into play, and undermine our performance.

Insight into these triggers, both in ourselves and in others, is invaluable in managing our interpersonal relations, and particularly in building mutual understanding if we need to manage conflict, or find mutually acceptable solutions.



If we feel threatened, “labelling” or reframing the situation by assuming positive intent and by responding positively (“turning the other cheek”) is often useful. And if we can try to understand where the other party/ies come from in terms of the SCARF model, we can seek to find those concessions or gestures that may be needed to move them from negative to positive, and towards conflict resolution.

In summary

– How can the above concepts help us in conflict resolution

Positive climate and setting to build trust, collaboration, respect for, and recognition of others' views and needs;

Open-mindedness and listening to various views and possible approaches;

Emotional safety – perceiving possibility of reward (not threat) helps people to think more clearly, and respond constructively.

Be aware of what could make others feel threatened.;

Many creative options to choose from – generate and develop several ideas together, to allow possibility of shared ownership of eventual solutions and action plans.

Selection of one, or a combination of creative suggestions, and turn that into agreement.

“In a third article, I will add to the original 3 Rs, 2 more Rs—Responsibility and Resilience, and show how all this relates to operational and creative thinking, and to constructive development of novel ideas into action plans.”

- Truida Prekel, SynNovation Solutions

Social Justice ADR Conference

- My experience of 2024 & looking forward to 2025

"Where you're meant to be"

Looking back

As I step into the foyer of the SJA ADR Conference 2024 venue, a familiar surge of excitement washes over me. I can't wait for the day to begin! What insights will the esteemed guest presenters share this year?

First things first—I head to the registration table to check in, then make a quick stop at the refreshments area for a snack and my essential morning brew. With my coffee in hand, I scan the foyer, eager to reconnect with the familiar faces I met at the ADR Conference in 2023.

I had no idea just how impactful those 2 days would be for me, the warmth of reunions, and the anticipation of learning from the best in the field. I took a deep breath, ready to immerse myself in what turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of the year.

Throughout the days, as each presenter spoke about the evolving landscape of mediation, I found myself nodding along, recognizing the challenges but also feeling invigorated by the solutions presented.

Then came day 2, the master classes. Interactive, thought-provoking, and filled with strategies we as mediators could apply to our own practices.

But perhaps the most valuable aspect of the conference was the people. Between sessions, I found myself in deep discussions with fellow mediators from across the country, sharing stories. One particular conversation stood out - A mediator from the far north, with whom I could identify as we found ourselves in the

same position, although at different times, offered support of which am very grateful. Laurie and Aneke, always being their welcoming selves and the immense support offered by fellow mediators, made me realize - *"This is my family"*.

As the final day wrapped up, I realized that this wasn't just a conference - it was a pivotal moment in my professional journey. I left feeling more than just informed; I felt inspired, recharged, and ready to take my mediation practice to the next level. Looking back, last year's mediators' conference wasn't just excellent—it was transformative.

Looking forward

This year marks my third time attending the SJA ADR Conference in person. Sure, I could join online, but for me, nothing compares to the in-person interactions with fellow mediators. The energy, the conversations, and the shared experiences make all the difference.

Adding to my excitement, I am now part of the SJA ADR Conference committee! We the committee members are working tirelessly to make the 2025 Appropriate Dispute Resolution Conference, scheduled for 10 and 11 September 2025, an unforgettable experience. With all the planning, it's shaping up to be an incredible event.

Day 1 promises to be packed with industry experts sharing their knowledge. And yes, you will have the opportunity to ask questions to the guest speakers.

This year, as the first day of the SJA ADR Conference winds down, the excitement doesn't end there. To keep the momentum going, we have planned an informal get-together - a chance to relax, unwind, and connect with fellow attendees in a more casual setting.

As the Western Cape sun sets on Wednesday evening, conversations will flow, laughter will fill the air, and new connections will be forged. This social event will be the perfect opportunity to reflect on the day's insights, exchange

ideas, and simply enjoy the company of like-minded

professionals. The gathering will wrap up around 8 PM, ensuring everyone is well-rested for another full day of learning and engagement at the conference.

I can already tell - it's going to be a memorable evening!

Day 2 will feature Master Class workshops - an absolute must-attend. These workshops offer a rare opportunity for deep, two-way engagement, where valuable lessons emerge from real-world discussions. Reflecting on past conferences, Day 2 always leaves me with thought-provoking questions and inspiring success stories. It reignites my passion and enthusiasm for being a mediator, reinforcing why I do what I do.

Online or in person

Deciding whether to attend the SJA ADR Conference online or in person required careful consideration of the pros and cons. While attending online would be more convenient, I knew I would miss out on the valuable opportunity to meet fellow mediators and expand my network and gain valuable information. Plus, the ever-present risk of load shedding could pose a significant challenge to staying connected virtually.

On the other hand, attending the conference in Cape Town in person came with its own set of hurdles - Cape Town traffic and accommodation in or around Rondebosch.

Accommodation ranges from reasonably priced options to the range of the ultra-rich, but the most affordable ones were snapped up months in advance. I opted for UCT All Africa House, and what a pleasure it was! The experience was so seamless that I gave it a five-star rating. Without hesitation, I booked my stay at UCT All Africa House once again for this year's SJA ADR conference. And no, I did not have to pay my stay all in one payment. The hotel is conveniently



located on the same premises as the Kramer Law Building, allowing me to enjoy a relaxed breakfast before taking a leisurely one-minute stroll to the conference venue. It's the perfect setup for an enriching and stress-free SJA ADR Conference experience.

As I prepare for yet another transforma-

tive SJA ADR conference experience, I can't help but reflect on how far I've come since my very first online ADR SJA conference back in 2022. Each year brings new insights, deeper connections, and a renewed passion for mediation. With a smile, and much anticipation, I look forward in embracing everything the 2025 SJA ADR conference has to offer.

The learning, the networking, the moments of inspiration—each one a stepping stone on my journey as a mediator.

And as I look ahead to the SJA ADR Conference 2025, I know one thing for certain: this is exactly where I'm meant to be.

- *Chris Roos, Mediator*

Submit your paper - Integrated Approaches to ADR



CALL FOR PAPERS

SOCIAL JUSTICE ADR CONFERENCE

IN COLLABORATION WITH UCT, FACULTY OF LAW,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCIAL LAW

Theme: Integrated Approaches To ADR

Date: 10 & 11 Sept 2025
Venue: Kramer Law Building
Faculty of Law
UCT
Cape Town



Our Contact

+ 27 (64) 800 3975



Our Email


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The Editor -

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Upcoming deadlines for submissions: 22 June 2025