

### **Story from a Mediation Training Participant:**

I recently arranged with a local car service to pick up my parents from Logan airport and bring them to our house. I'd provided the driver with my parents' flight information, my father's cell phone number, and my contact information. I'd provided my parents with the driver's name and cell phone number and directions to call the driver once they'd collected their luggage. Not long after the flight landed, I received several phone calls from my father's cell phone. Something was not working; I couldn't hear him and he couldn't hear me. About half an hour later, the car service driver called me on my cell. He was extremely agitated and kept repeating that he'd received multiple calls from my dad but wasn't able to hear him. "His cell phone isn't working," he declared. "I've tried to call him and he's tried to call me. And nothing's working! How can I tell them where to meet me if I can't communicate with them?" he demanded. My immediate reaction was to get defensive. I asked the driver what he normally does in circumstances like this and where he was. He said that he'd just left the airport and was driving home because he had no way of communicating with my parents.

It suddenly occurred to me to change my tactic based on the active listening skills that we'd just been learning in mediation training. "You sound really frustrated," I said. "I AM frustrated!" he roared. Okay, I thought. Now I'm getting somewhere... "I'm hearing that you need to be able to communicate with my parents in order to pick them up." He readily agreed. "What would be a good outcome here?" I asked him. While he replied that he wanted to be able to pick them up and deliver them to my house, I responded, "It's important to you to pick them up from the airport and bring them to Carlisle," I said. "Yes, yes!" he agreed. I thought of my alternatives: drive to the airport in rush-hour traffic to pick up my parents myself; or help the driver to get in touch with my parents so that he could complete the job. Just then, I got a text message from my dad. I quickly explained to the driver that I was both talking to him (the driver) and texting with my father, so I could arrange for the two of them to communicate directly by text message if that would work for him. The driver agreed, and I coordinated with my dad to text the driver directly.

A short while later, I received a call from the driver. He'd located my parents at Logan, they were safely in the car, and they were on their way.

I got off the phone, quite relieved that I didn't have to make a trip to Logan. My two sons, who had been attentively listening to my end of the phone conversation, jumped off the couch to congratulate me on successfully using my active listening skills! I was amazed at how well the situation resolved and grateful to put my recent mediation training to such good use!