

# Finding your *ikigai*

A reflection activity for mediators and coaches finding their footing in private practice.



# *Ikigai*

*Ikigai* is a Japanese concept that loosely translates as “a reason for being.”

The idea is that achieving *ikigai* brings satisfaction and meaning to life and paves the way to professional success. Everyone has an *ikigai*. Discovering and achieving one's own is a personal journey unlike anyone else's.

I designed this worksheet to help mediators and coaches reflect on the four components of *ikigai* as one way to find their own unique footing in private practice.



# What you love

1. Why do you love your work (mediation, coaching, etc.)? Push yourself to flesh this out.

2. What parts of your work do you look forward to most? What is it about these parts that makes you enjoy them so much?

3. If you could do more of what you love and less of what you don't love, what would you do differently in your work? What "rules" or conventions could you challenge to do so?

# What you're good at

4. What are you so good at that others ask you for help? Think about skills, talents, and tasks associated with conflict resolution work, as well as those seemingly unrelated to conflict resolution work.

5. What do those who know you best say you're really good at or compliment you on most frequently?

6. What are your secret powers? This is a serious question — what are you pretty awesome at, whether others know it or not?

# What the world needs

7. What is the value your work delivers to the people you serve? Try to explain your value without jargon in language that speaks to things those people care deeply about (from their point of view!).

8. When you are involved in a conflict that is stuck, complex, or particularly frustrating, what help do you wish you could magically get when you need it most? Don't label it – describe it.

9. Have you noticed gaps in the field? Perhaps you get requests for help you don't offer, or you want to help in a way that is different from the norm?

# What you can be paid for

10. What conflict resolution, communication, problem-solving and related skills, talents, and value do people willingly pay for?

11. Why are they willing to pay for those – what do those skills, talents, etc. achieve for them?

12. Look back at your answers to Questions 8-11. How could you shape your work to address those gaps, needs, and desires?

# Disagree better

[TammyLenski.com](http://TammyLenski.com)

Dr. Tammy Lenski is a student and teacher of conflict resolution. She specializes in addressing the friction that could impair teamwork and partnerships, and teaching how to approach disagreements in ways that prevent conflict from damaging high-priority relationships.

For over 20 years her conflict resolution work has been anchored by this question: *How can we talk out our disagreements in ways that reinforce our most important relationships and lead to better decisions?*

Author of [The Conflict Pivot: Turning Conflict into Peace of Mind](#) and [Making Mediation Your Day Job](#), Tammy began her career in higher education leadership, serving as a dean, vice president, and assistant professor before taking a mediation course and realizing that conflict resolution would be her life's work. She founded her firm, Myriaccord LLC in 1997.

She's served on the faculty in four U.S. graduate programs,



including as co-founder of the world's first master's degree in mediation (at Woodbury College, which later merged with Champlain College).

Tammy is the recipient of The Mary Parker Follett Award from the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) for innovative and pioneering work in the conflict resolution field, and the Pioneer Award from the New England Association for Conflict Resolution for significant contributions to the conflict resolution field.

She holds a bachelor's degree in world literature from Middlebury College, master's and doctoral degrees in higher education leadership from The University Vermont, and a certificate in mediation and conflict management from Woodbury College.

Tammy lives in New Hampshire, USA with her husband of nearly 30 years, a college professor.