



## “Every conflict is an opportunity”

Aik Kramer didn't see his ideals about justice reflected in traditional law, but he did see them reflected in mediation.

Two years ago he set up Generation Why, a Dutch platform and gathering point where young people can go for training and information on mediation.

### So what's wrong with the legal system?

“The first thing I learned when I studied law is that lawyers are not concerned with justice; that's what philosophers do. Lawyers primarily deal with applying rules. As a lawyer, you argue one side of the conflict as strongly as possible. You take a stance, make your argument and the next thing you know you've got a fight.”

### And do you think mediation enables us to achieve justice?

“In legal procedures, human relationships are sometimes sacrificed, while in mediation they are in fact the focus. Mediation is a method of conflict arbitration in which the mediator

challenges the discussion partners to gain insight into the interests and needs behind the other parties' standpoints. The mediator, who remains neutral, guides the process. The conflicting parties must come up with a solution themselves. Good mediators are facilitators that coach the process, not social workers.”

### Wouldn't it be better if we avoided conflict?

“Conflicts are clearly part of life, so it's better to address them and get as much as possible out of the process. Every conflict is an opportunity to reinvent your relationship with someone. Ultimately, this enables us to make the world a more just place.”

### How are you working to realize your aim?

“I've been a mediator since I was 23 and I lead mediation projects and training programs in education, the business sector and government. Through the youth platform Generation Why, I am trying to increase support for mediation.”

### Where will you be in a couple of years?

“I'd like to play a role in anchoring mediation as a social practice. I want to help create a world in which it's not about how to avoid conflicts but how to deal with them. My ideal world is one in which mediation is the first approach to solving problems, in which settling the conflict takes priority over being right.”—**MARIANNE LAMERS**