

Messenger

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Negotiation Strategies, Part 4

Over the past several months, we've looked at many aspects of negotiation. In this final section, we'll look at some things that are often not addressed: anger, fear, and ethics. It's not uncommon for tempers to flair and things to get a little out of hand while you're negotiating. During tense negotiations, frustrations often run high and people have a "fight or flight" response. They'll either respond in anger or they will cower in fear.

Always remember that anger disrupts negotiations. Not only does it put everyone in the room on edge, your body suffers physiological effects. For example, your blood pressure will rise and your ability to think and act logically will be impaired.

Becoming angry may also lead to a desire for revenge. You will inevitably say or do something which will jeopardize your bargaining position. Along with this, you may become obstinate. You'll be stubborn, won't allow any room for concession or bargaining, or won't be willing to accept any changes, even reasonable ones. This is never how you want a negotiation to be handled. Anger won't solve any problems; it'll only create more!

When you feel your temperature rising, John Ilich's book Winning Through Negotiation offers a few ways to stay calm:

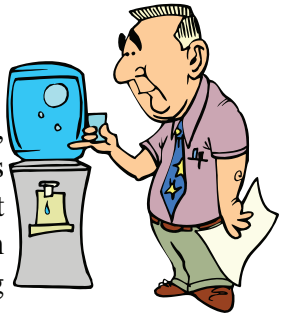
1. Take a deep breath and count to ten
2. Suggest a five-minute break to calm down

3. Take a walk
4. Drink some cold water

If your opponent gets personal, say that you are negotiating issues and that personal remarks are not appropriate. In order to manage an opponent who is verbally insulting you, never join in. Think about the consequences if the negotiation breaks down. Try to steer the conversation back to the issue being negotiated. If an apology is needed, make it. If there is a misunderstanding, discuss it.

If your opponent is riled up, you may need to calm him or her down before continuing. Provide time for calming down. This may mean taking a short break, stopping for lunch, calling it a day, or you may need to let several days or weeks pass before getting together again. There is the occasional instance where two personalities clash so much that arguments will occur any time they are together. If this happens, it may be wise to send someone to bargain in your place.

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Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.
Max Lucade

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Personality conflicts, however, shouldn't be an excuse to end a negotiation. Try to neutralize personality conflicts. Stay low-key, but be frank. Moderate your tone of voice and attitude. Acknowledge from the very beginning that you have very little in common, however, since you're professionals, you should be able to work together.

I don't know about you, but people can usually read me like a book. I have a really hard time hiding when I'm frustrated or upset. When I'm in a disagreement, I find it difficult to avoid negative body language. Try to keep tabs on your emotions and steer away from exasperated eye-rolling or sighing, sneering, finger pointing, fist shaking, book, paper or furniture throwing, or any other kind of threatening gestures.

When put into a conflict situation, instead of getting angry, people may become fearful and timid. According to Mr. Ilich, there are three main negotiating fears.



Fear of loss (fear of losing something of value)

The potential of losing something of value can be intimidating. Whether the loss is tangible (a contract) or intangible (respect), to feel defeated is never welcome. If the negotiation starts to look like you'll be on the losing side, never give your opponent any hint that you have a great desire to make a deal. If the other person knows you'll do just about anything to reach an agreement, he or she may try to take advantage of you! Be mentally prepared to walk away if it's not what you want. Try to find an alternative solution before you bargain.

Fear of the unknown (you usually imagine the worst)

People who are worriers have a problem with this. Don't try to play the worst-case-scenario mind

game before the negotiation even begins. Prepare thoroughly; it will give you confidence. Remind yourself that most horrible outcomes you are imagining do not usually happen. Our minds can make any situation worse than it truly is. Before you even arrive at the meeting, have alternative solutions in mind. Also keep in mind that walking away from the deal is not necessarily a bad thing.

Fear of failure

As a general rule, no one likes failing. Whether it's in a game or a negotiation, failure can cause some trepidation. Acknowledge your fear instead of repressing it. Take time to prepare thoroughly. Mentally rehearse your negotiation before you go in. Dress for the negotiation in clothes that make you feel good about yourself. Feeling confident walking in can make you more assertive. Make sure your notes or files are in order and that you have everything you need.

It's also important to be able to spot your opponent's fear. If your opponent makes an offer or counteroffer that's especially generous or doesn't protest when you make a far-out proposal, he may be just as eager to have the negotiation behind him.

There is one final aspect of negotiation that I would like to cover--ethics. I feel like ethics are often overlooked when people teach negotiation strategies. Ethics should come ***first*** – not last. Ethics in negotiation is a reflection of personal integrity. To knowingly give false information or misrepresent the facts is fraud.

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***Your honesty influences others to be honest.
George Washington***

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Here is a checklist for ethics in negotiations:

- Determine your personal ethics. Know what you are willing to say or do and what lines should not be crossed.
- Evaluate your relationships in the negotiation.
- Probe – don't assume what you hear is true. Ask questions if things seem too good to be true.
- Pause – you don't have to answer every question. It's okay to tell the other person that you'll get back with her on a particular issue.
- Be assertive and persistent.
- Maintain your own standards – don't sink to theirs. Not everyone has high ethical standards. Raise the bar. You might be surprised who follows your lead.
- Don't lie – find a way to use the truth to your advantage. There is never an excuse to lie. While it may seem favorable at the time, the consequences of being caught in a lie are far worse than the benefits!

Richard Shell's book Bargaining for Advantage has some wonderful approaches to ethics in negotiation.

“Negotiation is a game.”

There are rules, and those rules are defined by the law. Any conduct within the rules is ethical. Conduct outside the rules is unethical. I know that seems elementary, but there are many people who don't feel like rules apply to them.

“Do the right thing, even if it hurts.”

Negotiation is a part of social life. The same ethics that govern the home govern the workplace. If you would be embarrassed to hear that your children did or said something unethical, then you shouldn't be

doing it either. Children learn most of their behavior (whether good or bad) from their parents. Strive to give them something to look up to.

While you want to come to the best agreement, handling the negotiation ethically and with respect for the other party is for what you should strive. The more honest you are in your dealings with others, the more esteem you will gain with them. I hope you've enjoyed this series on negotiation.



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