



NEGOTIATION

Negotiation is the process used when dialogue and collaboration break down. When disputes emerge and individual rights and interests are in conflict, both sides must be able to clearly articulate proposals.

Many of us have been raised to believe it is selfish or impolite to ask for what we want and need. In the work environment we may recognize these inhibitions should be overcome, but in our personal relationships, the skill of negotiation is rarely encouraged. As children we may feel we have little say in the decisions made by our parents. As parents we may see negotiation with children as showing weakness. Negotiations between parents and children (on both ends of the age spectrum) can be effective in diffusing tension. Soliciting input from all concerned parties does not eliminate the responsibility of those making the decisions.

Use of negotiation may in fact be a key element in preserving relationships. When communication becomes difficult we often retreat or give up altogether. If we were aware another option existed, it could provide a way to salvage a situation or even enhance future collaboration.

Strategies for conducting successful negotiations are:

- separate the people from the problem
- focus on interests not positions
- formulate proposals
- find options for mutual gain
- create solutions using criteria and standards

Successful negotiators seek solutions that meet the legitimate interests of each side, resolve conflicting interests based on agreed upon criteria, consider others who will be affected, avoid taking hardened positions that have emotional and economic costs, and improve (or avoid further damage to) the relationship. In addition, recognition of ploys of opponents and use of tactics for diffusing them, increases the potential for positive results.

Negotiation skills are valuable in dealing with personal issues and cultural differences. Use of negotiation with family members, in friendships and in organizational conflicts in addition to the workplace, takes us from “negative intimacy” ([link to Relationship Cycle Chart](#)) into a business-like framework.