



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN NEGOTIATING

Negotiation sounds like a big word, but it is something that we do every day. Whenever we want something to happen that we need another person's help to get done, we are negotiating. Asking our parents or guardians to stay late at a friend's house, figuring out who is going to do what in a group project for school, assigning chores among you and your siblings, and even deciding what movie to see with a friend all involve negotiation. The stakes can get even higher if we are in conflict with someone.

The most constructive negotiations take into consideration the interests and needs of all people involved, as well as the best and worst possible outcomes. For these reasons, it is always important to prepare for a negotiation. Make sure you gather as much information as you can about the situation before negotiating.

You can do this by thinking through both your own interests and needs and what might be the interests and needs of the other person or people involved. People are more willing to enter into negotiations if they see how the process can be beneficial for them. Agreements that are lopsided may end up falling apart, harming relationships and leaving people in worse situations than they were in before. Try to come to the negotiation with some solutions in mind that could meet everyone's interests and needs, while being open to other suggestions that come up during the negotiation.

Keep in mind that negotiation is a process to resolve conflict and create a better situation than the one you are currently in with others. For this reason, it is advantageous to negotiate only if you think that you will be better off after the talks. If there is a high likelihood that you will be worse off after the talks, then it is not worth negotiating. When considering if you will be better or worse off afterward, it is important to think in terms of both the issue/goal and the relationship between the people involved in the conflict. Also, think about the best and worst possible outcomes before beginning the process. This includes thinking about the best and worst possible alternatives to negotiation, which can help you determine whether to try and negotiate and also what kind of agreement you may accept if you do negotiate.

For example, if you are not happy with an essay assignment, you might think about negotiating with the teacher about writing a song, instead. Things to think about include how important it is to you to be able to work on an assignment you are into (issue/goal), and how you think the teacher will react to your suggestion (relationship). If you are really just trying to get out of an assignment, it might be best not to negotiate, as the relationship with the teacher may suffer – he or she may not hold your academic quality as highly in the future.

Think of negotiation like putting together a puzzle. Look at the situation piece by piece, tackling the easiest issues first, and then moving on to the harder issues. For example, if you are negotiating your relationship with a friend after you heard rumors about him/her talking behind your back, you may want to resolve the information issue first – did he or she actually say that – and then move onto the issue of trust.



Ask, “What do I want to happen?” “What do they want to happen?” “What are my interests and needs?” “What are their interests and needs?” “What outcomes can I accept?” “What outcomes can’t I accept?” “What outcomes can they accept?” “What outcome can’t they accept?” “What are some strategies for meeting my interests and needs?” “What are some strategies for meeting their interests and needs?” “What are my best and worst possible outcomes?” “What are their best and worst possible outcomes?”

Of course, there are lots of conflicts that occur in the moment, and we don't necessarily have a lot of time to prepare for negotiating a solution to them. However, keeping in mind these questions, especially those regarding interests and needs, and staying open to the ideas of others involved, will help you brainstorm strategies to come to a successful resolution.