
Never Split the Difference Summary PDF Cheatsheet —

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? 1. Negotiate with Emotion: Emotional intelligence, not just reason and logic, is crucial in effective negotiation

In the 1970s, the FBI didn't have much of a negotiation strategy. In the 1980s, they assumed people were "rational actors" which didn't really work. Then the FBI learned to work with human emotions and cognitive biases rather than ignoring them, and they became much more effective at negotiation.

2. Listen deeply: Genuine listening helps you to understand the other person's worldview

Listening with an open mind is the first step to effective negotiation. They should feel that you fully understand their positions, beliefs, feelings and worldview. The beginning of a good negotiation can sound similar to a conversation with a therapist.

3. Reflect Their Viewpoint: Summarize their position back to them to demonstrate your understanding and empathy

One of the best ways to demonstrate understanding is to repeat back what the other person said, in a shorter way, and in your own words. The best two words you can hear in a negotiation are "that's right" when the other side acknowledges you've captured their feelings, beliefs and needs.

4. Label Thoughts and Feelings: Verbally label what the other person is thinking and feeling out loud to validate their experience

Labeling means saying out loud what the other person is thinking or feeling right now. These sentences often start with "It seems like..." or "It looks like..." Labels help defuse negative emotions and improve feelings of understanding.

5. Address Accusations: List all the worst accusations or criticisms they may say, and address them upfront to defuse tension

Make a list of all the worst accusations they may throw at you. If you are the one who brings up a negative accusation or objection first, then you are in a much stronger position to address it. You'll have time to prepare a great response. And often these negatives can go unsaid, yet kill the whole deal anyway.

? 6. Radio Show Voice: Speak calmly with a slow, calm, clear voice—like a late night radio show host

Most of the time, your voice should be either light/positive or you should sound like a late night radio host. That means speaking slowly, calmly and with a downward inflection. This helps make the situation feel calm and safe.

7. Ask Open-Ended Questions: Open questions encourage dialogue and help you "disagree without disagreeing"

An open-ended question is a question that requires a longer response than “yes” or “no.” These usually start with “how” or “what” Open ended questions are a powerful way to disagree and guide the conversation in your direction while sounding like you’re just asking for help. For example, when a kidnapper demands ransom money, Chris doesn’t disagree or argue but just says “How am I supposed to get that money?” which almost always shifts the whole focus of the conversation.

8. Watch For Leverage: Be observant to uncover useful details that will give you leverage in the negotiation

Leverage is having some advantage to influence the other person in a negotiation. Positive leverage is having something they want. Negative leverage is being able to inflict some loss they don’t want. And normative leverage is being able to influence someone through the rules, beliefs or philosophy they hold. This last one is why listening closely is so important, so you can discover what makes the other person tick.

9. Use Cognitive Biases: Understanding typical biases or false beliefs people have can give you an edge in negotiations

We can often create leverage or advantage in a negotiation through cognitive biases—which are the ways our brains distort our decision-making. In the Haiti example, Chris creates leverage from nothing using cognitive biases related to deadlines, anchors and specific numbers.

This is just a sample!

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