



NEGOTIATION: WINNING BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT

GOALS

1. Establish the knowledge and appreciation of everyday negotiation happenings.
2. Increase understanding as to the meaning of the negotiation process.
3. Know how to involve others in an effective negotiation process effectively.
4. Recognize the active role of negotiation in caring for patients and administrating nursing staff.
5. Utilize hard and soft skills in the process of negotiation.

KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Negotiation
2. Positional Bargaining
3. Hard Skills
4. Soft Skills

Have you ever said “YES” to someone or something and then wondered why you “gave in?” Sometimes a person wants something so badly; the only way to satisfy the situation is to say, “YES!” Sometimes the human effort to find a mutual ground of understanding is so difficult and intellectually challenging that we find ourselves mumbling under our breath.

Where did we go wrong? Did the word “negotiation” ever enter into our thoughts? Now (and forever), our first thought as professionals should be: Oh goody, an opportunity to negotiate! Almost everything we do in life with other people involves a negotiation process, or we end in conflict. So, let us learn the skill of negotiation!!

First—what is the definition of “negotiation?” It is when two or more parties reach a compromise. It is through conversation, agreement, and mutual respect. In nursing, the dialogue between patient/client and nurse becomes mutually beneficial. The outcome for the patient is improved health. The outcome for the nurse is the satisfaction that nursing skill and knowledge contributed to the improvement of a patient’s health. That mutual winning has an intended positive outcome for both parties—or shall we say a mutually negotiated outcome.

A job description has stated expectations of behavior. The nursing administrator negotiates with the nursing staff employee to perform tasks and actions to attain, retain, and receive compensation for job performance. In organizational endeavors, positive negotiation skills can avoid conflict and improve work relationships.

RESPONDING TO BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Involving others in the negotiating process is essential. It is not to be, “You Win!” or “You Lose!” It requires a respect of the emotion around the talk and making the passion legitimate. Feelings are often more than talk. Allow the other person(s) in the negotiation process to explain their grievance. Listen

carefully and acknowledge what is said. Listen quietly without a response or reaction to emotional outbursts. Encourage the completion of verbal frustrations to prevent the festering of future negative feelings.

Learn personal symbolic ways to resolve an emotional impact. Try such individual gestures as presenting a small gift, eating together, sharing familial experiences, or an apology with a future commitment to improvement. A simple apology may be the least costly and most important human investment you can make.

Work on building relationships. A pound of prevention is worth a pound of cure (so they say). By building positive relationships, there is a tendency to decrease the need for a negotiation process. If negotiation is needed, knowing someone well makes the negotiation easier. Trust between two people can become the basis for diffusing disagreements. The positive relationship with others decreases defensiveness, and negative reactions are less likely to interfere with agreements.

POSITIONAL BARGAINING SKILLS

Positional bargaining, in this instance, is when each party asserts what they absolutely will or will not do. However, other “softer” assertions of positional bargaining might be possible.

Negotiation Skill of Positional Bargaining includes:

1. Taking a position related to your needs or expectations.
2. Providing the anchor of what you want or need in uncertain terms by saying exactly what you want or need.
3. Listening carefully to the other person’s option(s).
4. Being prepared to alter your position appropriately to meet the need.

The fact is that the more *extreme* your stated position to meet your needs or expectations and the *smaller (fewer)* your concessions to meet the other person’s options, the more time and effort it will take to discover *if an agreement is possible*. Undisciplined arguing to arrive at a mutual agreement can be damaging to a lasting and workable relationship. The more people involved in determining a bilateral positional bargaining/negotiation, the more serious and difficult it is to negotiate. If a final decision must include a higher authority, it becomes more difficult to have a constant and lasting negotiation if the higher authority/power is not at the negotiation table.

Every negotiator has two interests---substance and relationship. Maintaining a positive relationship often results in the acquisition of the desired substance. Learning to “work” the soft and hard skills of negotiation will allow for more successful negotiations.

Dealing with people and their needs is a skill. The perception of a problem is often a problem with a person’s thinking (thought process)—and your thinking might be different than their thinking! Differences requiring negotiation exist because there are differences in thinking and ideology.

Negotiation can be known as a “hard negotiation” or a “soft negotiation.” It is often best to use negotiation skills somewhere in the middle of being *soft* (maintaining relationships) and a *hard*

negotiation strategy (always having it your way). Consider these negotiation behaviors of hard versus soft negotiation skills:

Hard Skills:	Soft Skills:
Insist on your position	Insist on an agreement
Make threats	Make offers
Insist on your position	Insist on an agreement
Distrust others	Trust others
Dig into your position	Change your position easily
Mislead as to your bottom line	Disclose your bottom line
Be process-oriented	Be people-oriented
Apply pressure	Yield to pressure
Focus on your position	Focus on mutual interest
Refuse options	Consider options

As professional nurses, we use these concepts daily and know how personal relationships affect outcomes. If nurses think “negotiation” when working effectively with patients and professional cohorts, nurses are more likely to select the middle road behaviors between hard and soft skills to obtain mutually beneficial outcomes.

NOTHING NEW----JUST A REMINDER OF EXPECTED PROFESSIONAL ABILITY

You, as a professional nurse, already knew this information—didn’t you!? It is nothing new. However, we continue to hone our understanding of negotiation skills as well as appreciate the alternative view. The capability to effectively negotiate is the hallmark of the professional nurse.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What is the last situation in which you “gave in” without negotiation? How could you have carried on a conversation that would have included “middle of the road negotiation skills?”
2. What skills do you plan to use next time a person challenges you regarding your decision?
3. How do you use your relationship skills to help prevent the need for negotiation?
4. What is your concept of “winning a negotiation?”

RECOMMENDED READING

GETTING TO YES (Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In) by Roger Fisher and William Ury

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