



Emotional Triggers: How Emotions Affect Your Negotiating Ability

How emotional triggers can impact your negotiations

BY PON STAFF — ON SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2020 / NEGOTIATION SKILLS



Imagine you're about to negotiate with a competing firm about a possible merger, but will need to combat emotional triggers.

You enter the conference room and find a reasonable and fair representative from the other company, someone you've reached mutually beneficial agreements with in the past.

But you're in a terrible mood: on the way to work,

you were rear-ended by a distracted driver talking on his cell phone. As you sit down at the negotiation table, you contemplate the hassle of repairs and insurance claims. Even though you're still seething, you're certain that you can separate your rage and emotional triggers from the task at hand. But can you?

Probably not. Emotions of all types alter our thoughts, behavior, and underlying biology. In negotiations, the fact that integral emotions—feelings triggered by the negotiation itself—affect outcomes is well documented. For instance, if you found yourself negotiating with an old nemesis, you would experience integral anger. We now know that incidental emotions, or feelings unrelated to the negotiation at hand, also can have a significant effect on negotiations.

The Impact of Feelings and Emotional Triggers on Decision Making at the Bargaining Table

Whenever we make a decision, most of us assess our feelings to some degree. If we can label the source of an incidental emotion, then it is significantly less likely to affect our negotiation decisions. In a clever negotiation research study, researchers Norbert Schwarz of the University of Michigan and Gerald Clore of the University of Virginia had half of the participants answer on a sunny day a phone survey about life satisfaction; the other half answered the survey on a rainy day. As you might expect, participants who received calls on a rainy day reported significantly less life satisfaction than did participants who received calls on a sunny day. But when researchers began the call by asking, "By the way, how is the weather down there?" participants in the rainy condition responded as positively as participants in the sunny condition. Acknowledging the bad weather defused its impact on their evaluations.

How to Defuse Your Emotional Triggers Before Negotiation

To recognize and defuse your own incidental emotions, start by identifying your emotional triggers. A nationwide study led by Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University showed that Americans become most distressed when commuting or when talking to their bosses. Could these triggers be affecting your negotiations (see also, bias in negotiations)? Awareness of this possibility will improve your odds of recognizing the effects of such triggers in the heat of the moment.

Bargaining Strategies to Defuse Your Counterpart's Emotional Triggers During Negotiation

To recognize and defuse an incidental emotion in your counterpart, remember that her mood may have nothing to do with you. If you suspect that the other side's feelings are incidental to the negotiation, encourage her to draw a connection to the source of these feelings. Open-ended questions such as "Terrible day out, isn't it?" or "How was the drive over?" can go a long way toward minimizing the influence of negative emotions on judgments and choices.

How do YOU control your emotional triggers for effective dispute resolution or bargaining purposes?

Adapted from "Negotiating Under the Influence," by Jennifer S. Lerner, Professor, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, first published in the *Negotiation* newsletter.

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I always have 3 steps to control my emotion:

1. Be present

When I have a bad luck which causes bad emotion, I always tell myself: It is all over. Let me take a look what I need to do next, and let me plan the following things. This can help me forget the unhappy thing and focus the present work.

2. Watch the emotion

When I am present in a situation, I will watch thoughts that come into my mind. Once I can watch the emotion, I will separate myself from it, and it can't take over me for a long time.

3. Make a choice

Once I have break a cup, I will have two choices of the emotion:

Negative: I break a very good cup, I am so stupid

Positive: I'm lucky because I didn't hurt myself.

Once I select the positive one, I will always be happy, in any situation.

REPLY