

HOW TO BE A POSITIVE LEADER



SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

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Negotiate Mindfully

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When you negotiate with people inside or outside your organization, are you able to align your emotions with your strategy? Are you able to engage in productive conversations, leading you and others toward desired positive outcomes? Many conversations you lead at work constitute a negotiation over resources. Sometimes the resource is money, but more frequently, leaders negotiate timelines, roles, responsibilities, or ideas on how to move forward. Because negotiations inherently involve both a common goal, such as joint value creation, as well as personal agendas, such as individual value claiming, they can be emotionally challenging. How do you manage the emotions that surface in such conversations? In this chapter, we offer strategies for mindful emotion management and explore relationship capacities enabling leaders to negotiate mindfully¹ and cocreate extraordinary value for all.

The Value of Negotiating Mindfully

Research suggests that emotions can challenge or facilitate negotiation processes and outcomes.² Positive emotions, such as happiness, or negative ones, such as anger, can be helpful in a

negotiation, but can also be counterproductive. The key is to align emotions with strategic goals, which requires displaying your emotions strategically and responding strategically to the emotions displayed by others. Such emotion management is especially challenging in complex, mixed-motive tasks such as negotiations. Although many wrongly assume negotiation contexts are purely competitive,³ negotiations are both a cooperative and competitive social interaction.⁴ Negotiations provide opportunities for synergistic value to be created, but this value is distributed between negotiators. Functioning within this tension of simultaneously being motivated to create and to claim value necessitates sophisticated cooperative and competitive strategies that are well established in negotiation literature.⁵ But less frequently examined are the emotional dynamics resulting from engaging in both cooperation *and* competition. When you negotiate, you might feel happy about cooperating to explore synergies and at the same time feel anxious about how much of this value you will be able to secure for your team.⁶

A mindful approach enables emotion management in negotiations. Mindfulness is a practice that positive leaders can adopt, as well as foster in their organizations, to excel in negotiations. In everyday parlance, it refers to being reflective, deliberate, and wise. It is considered a process of self-reflection, enabling attention and learning. Research on mindful attention and reflection has provided valuable insights and made significant contributions to a growing body of psychology and organizational behavior research.⁷ Our definition of mindfulness is broader. Leaders need not only to practice self-reflection but to cultivate an awareness of openness and presence in the context of interpersonal, or relational, dynamics. Therefore, to negotiate mindfully goes beyond a cognitive capacity to be in the present moment, to the development of a positive relational presence.

The relational capacities of mindfulness enable emotion management and fuel a positive approach to negotiations, defined by Kopelman as maximizing sustainable individual and joint economic outcomes as well as promoting individual and organizational well-being.⁸

Relational Mindfulness

As a leader who would like to productively manage emotions in the context of negotiations, you need to cultivate relational mindfulness by being (1) balanced, (2) joyful and kind, and (3) compassionate.

Enabler 1: Be Balanced

Balance, or equanimity, is a critical relational capacity. A balanced approach, not only with one's own emotions, but also with the emotional dynamics experienced in the context of relationships, is essential for successful negotiation. It requires being nonjudgmental and nonreactive to your own emotions and to those displayed by others. To be nonjudgmental suggests accepting the present emotions as your current reality, a reality that can be changed, and yet currently "is." For example, you may feel extremely anxious anticipating a complex negotiation. Even if you wish you had not gotten anxious, you are experiencing anxiety. To be nonreactive suggests not internally responding to this feeling of anxiety, whether by judging yourself for experiencing the emotion or by acting on the emotion. Balance requires metaphorically viewing emotions simply as they are: emotions. You cultivate an awareness of emotions while you experience them and notice the constant changes in how you experience your emotions.

Balance enables you as a leader to observe and be "with your emotions," not "in your emotions."⁹

Enabler 2: Be Joyful and Kind

Relational mindfulness goes beyond being cooperative. It includes a capacity to celebrate when others do well. Often, people feel jealous when they compare themselves to others, and such negative social comparisons lead to resentment toward others' happiness. To rejoice with the happiness of others strengthens your social ties in any negotiation. Beyond being able to experience sympathetic joy in the positive outcomes of others, relational mindfulness includes being friendly and kind to others.¹⁰ Kindness is not a passive state, but an active practice. Cultivating kindness toward others encompasses intentional thoughts, feelings, and behavior. An example is the loving-kindness foundational meditation, which includes consciously sending *metta* (a Pali word for loving-kindness) to cultivate kindness toward others. Research shows that loving-kindness meditation fosters positive emotions toward oneself and others and promotes physical and psychological well-being.¹¹

Enabler 3: Be Compassionate

Compassion refers to your capacity to empathize with the pain of others. Empathy and perspective taking are critical to cultivate compassion. But compassion goes beyond these thoughts and feelings. Compassion refers not only to your capacity to feel others' suffering or pain but also to your capacity to take some action to alleviate others' pain. Compassion helps you cultivate patience to regulate emotions toward those who are suffering and also toward those who might be hurting you. It is critical in organizational contexts.¹² Compassion, when

directed toward yourself, also helps you to accept your own shortcomings and manage associated emotions.

Overall, a mindful relational presence suggests a deep positive connection with yourself *and* with your negotiation partners. In the context of negotiations, relational mindfulness enables consideration and alignment of the emotional dynamics you *and* others experience as you explore opportunities to cocreate value. It is not an outcome but a process through which negotiators story their relationship. Leaders who mindfully narrate, rather than be narrated by the emotions that surface in negotiations, create more possibilities to unlock resources that cocreate and maximize value.

Strategies for Managing Emotions

Self-narration is a process that enables you to mindfully and strategically manage emotions during a negotiation.¹³ Mindfulness enables nonjudgmental and nonreactive observing and accepting your emotions with positive relational presence. Strategically refers to aligning emotions with cooperative and competitive actions that help you generatively cocreate and appropriately allocate negotiated resources, while also building positive business relationships.

The self-narration process includes three strategies to manage emotions in real time during a negotiation. A scientific understanding of emotions may be helpful to see why. In general, there are three critical phases in moving from noticing social triggers to experiencing a full emotional response:¹⁴ (1) basic perception of stimuli triggering the emotion, such as seeing your teams' reports; (2) cognitive appraisal or interpretation of

this data, such as interpreting these as extraordinary performance; and (3) an onset of physiological experiences, such as feeling an increased heart rate and excitement. It is possible to intervene at each or any of these phases by managing the emotions as you experience them. By mindfully and strategically redirecting your attention, reinterpreting information, and/or reconfiguring how your body responds, self-narration enables you to leverage both positive and negative emotions. For example, perhaps you were only mildly happy at first and wished you were more excited about your team's extraordinary performance. Appropriately increasing or decreasing the intensity of your emotions can help you achieve your negotiation goals.

Three strategies will help you to suppress or to intensify an emotion you wish to experience differently. Imagine you feel intensely angry during a meeting when a project manager (PM) in your leadership team lays out a plan you think is completely unreasonable. You wish you did not feel so angry. It would help you negotiate a more appropriate timeline. What could you do? The following are examples of the three strategies for emotion management in this situation.

Strategy 1: Mindfully Notice Emotionally Incongruent Triggers in the Environment

While listening to the PM utter the words "three months," you also notice she directs her gaze toward someone seated at the other end of the conference table. As your gaze moves across the room, you also notice the excitement of her team, aligning together to meet an important organizational project. You remember she had successfully completed past projects in what you considered warp speed.

Strategy 2: Mindfully Reinterpret Emotional Triggers

You reinterpret the event, realizing the PM's goal was to impress someone on the other side of the table. You consider whether three months represents an ambitious anchor rather than an overly aggressive delivery date, and therefore is a solid negotiation strategy.

Strategy 3: Mindfully Modify Physiological Reaction to Emotional Triggers

As you continue to listen to the PM's pitch, you intentionally—and inconspicuously—change the grasp on your pencil from a grip to gently holding it like a violin bow. At the same time that you consider interpreting the goal to be “ambitious” rather than “aggressive,” you feel a sigh of relief. At the end of that sigh, you slowly inhale as much oxygen as possible into your abdomen to boost the effect. You make sure nobody notices, as it could be misinterpreted or trigger an emotional reaction in others.

The order of the interventions is fluid and not necessarily linear. You can iteratively intervene, beginning with any of the strategies. You can generate a cycle of interventions, enabling you to suppress or to intensify an emotion. The interventions are productive, aligned with your negotiation goals, and therefore your emotions are now both mindfully and strategically displayed.¹⁵

You may find yourself automatically self-evaluating when you experience strong emotions that you believe are inappropriate or counterproductive. These thoughts can make things worse because they lead you to self-ruminate and repeatedly experience the emotion you wish you did not feel. You intensify, rather than diminish, the emotions. Ironically, you may then criticize yourself for self-evaluating and experience even

stronger negative emotions. Letting go is very difficult. But accepting your emotions, such as your anger, is even more difficult. To negotiate mindfully requires exactly that: nonjudgmental acceptance and compassion toward yourself. You may not be proud of what you feel or comfortable with emotions others express. However, these emotions may be a reality that paradoxically needs to be accepted as is, in order to change it. Mindfulness enables being nonjudgmental and nonreactive, therefore accepting the reality of the present. The relational capacities of mindfulness go beyond mere acceptance by helping you to direct and to manage emotions in a positive and productive way. Mindfulness thus enables the three strategies for emotion management.

Putting It All Together

To negotiate mindfully, leaders need to narrate the emotional landscape of cooperative and competitive negotiations by cultivating equanimity, joyful kindness, and compassion. These relational capacities enable mindful and strategic emotion management, leading to successful negotiation outcomes. Adopting a positive approach to negotiations,¹⁶ leaders bring out the best in themselves and others by cultivating relational mindfulness and narrating emotions to cocreate extraordinary economic outcomes and individual and organizational well-being.

CULTIVATING RELATIONAL MINDFULNESS AT REVIVA AND CELIA

Amos is a co-owner of Reviva and Celia, a famous restaurant located in the residential Israeli neighborhood of Ramat Hasharon. The place is known for its fabulous pastries, food, and service. For many years, it has been one of the country's most successful restaurants. Amos leads the

restaurant's strategy, staff, and customer relations. He negotiates in all of these roles, mindfully cocreating value while keeping an eye on the profitability of the business. Amos negotiates every detail of running his business to perfection. Yet the success of the restaurant is equally attributable to the quality of the food, led by co-owner Reviva, as it is to Amos's relationally mindful negotiation skills.

"Always crowded, yet feels intimate," is a common theme echoed in reviews of the business. The restaurant is known as a place for celebrity sightings and the "who's who" of Israel's business, political, and entertainment world. Although it operates in a very direct and frequently confrontational Israeli culture, Amos mindfully negotiates and manages his emotions to cocreate value and generate a genuine experience that is difficult to replicate. If you are familiar with the restaurant industry, you know that customers and proprietors can experience strong emotions that may or may not be aligned with positive business outcomes. Amos skillfully narrates his own emotions and strategically responds to emotions displayed by his customers.

Amos is balanced and kind. He rejoices when others are pleased and is compassionate. He teaches his staff to do the same. "We didn't invent anything new," Amos says.¹⁷ "Many neighborhood cafes have regular customers, but we took it to perfection because we are deliberate, genuine, and consistent." For example, every new waiter learns the name of the businessman who always sits at the corner table, who is sitting next to them on a particular day, and what they are celebrating. The staff knows the name of the businesswoman sitting at the far-away table and whether she had a good day on the stock market. It's strategy, but it's based on his personality and philosophy of life.

In Asian culture, a beautiful metaphor represents his mindful and deliberate presence: "like a water droplet on a lotus leaf." The water droplet on the lotus leaf stays, maintaining its shape. It never sticks to the surface, yet it is on the leaf. Amos is there, and together with his staff, provides the perfect leaf. As a customer, you feel like you are the *only* water droplet on the leaf. Your needs are maintained, respected, and fostered. His emotions are aligned with a mindful inter-being that deliberately maintains your privacy, yet provides a sense of intimacy and familiarity that makes

everyone (staff, suppliers, and customers) belong and feel at home. And everyone always feels like they *got a great deal*. Some of his customers have been coming for twenty years, and their children and grandchildren also are now customers. In an industry with extremely high turnover, his staff is committed. Amos explains, "Something in the energy of how we interact as co-owners and as staff; it touches customers, and it's a fact, it works." Amos masterfully builds and fosters mindful and strategic business relationships and cocreates extraordinary negotiation outcomes.

TWEETS

Leaders can appropriately increase or decrease the intensity of emotions to cocreate positive relationships and maximize profits.

A positive approach to negotiations leverages mindful alignment of emotions through three iterative strategies.

To constructively manage emotions, leaders need to cultivate relational mindfulness.