



How Do We Negotiate?

Overview: In approaching a conflict we often come up with a solution that we think is perfect without considering other options. We develop arguments to defend it and it becomes our position, often hard and fast. And yet when we work to solve conflicts, we limit ourselves if we analyze or deal with disputes only from the stance of fixed positions. When we hang onto a position and forget the deeper interests and needs we're negotiating, we leave our central points out of the discussion and diminish our possibilities of achieving what we want. This constitutes one of the risks of only negotiating based on fixed positions. If, however, we negotiate based on the needs and interests of the people involved, we multiply the possible solutions because frequently there are several ways to meet everybody's needs. When we build solutions collectively with the parties involved in the conflict, we often reach solutions that we hadn't originally contemplated but that allow us to advance in our interests and positively transform the conflict. As women and movement activists, it is important for us to develop new ways of relating among ourselves that increase our collective power and collaboration rather than cause division and distrust. The problem is that in trying to defend our positions, we can end up undermining each other's credibility and intelligence and dismissing people's feelings and emotions. These are learned patterns of behavior that often surface in conflict, and in the case of women only affirm the cultural belief that we are conflictual and don't stick together. For this reason, it is very important to reach agreements and develop processes that transform the ways we relate to one another.

Purpose: Different ways of negotiating and building agreements are explored through a role play. Emphasis is placed on positive approaches and ways of engaging by taking into consideration people's and group's needs and interests. This activity can be done in conjunction with the **Onion Analysis** (Conflict Pack).

Time: 45 minutes

Credit: This role play was created by Patricia Ardon with Susan Williams from Responding to Conflict (RTC)

Materials and Space:

- Case of Wise Fruit - Each person should only receive the information about their role.
- Flip chart
- Markers



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Process:

In plenary:

- Introduce purpose and process
- Form random groups of 4-6 people, according to number of overall participants
- Explain that each group will have three people playing assigned roles and the rest of the participants will be observers. Assign roles to three people in each group as follows: One will be a business-person, another will be the owner of a shop of natural products, and the third will be the seller at the market.
- Have them, gather **separately by roles** (i.e. all the people who will take on each role - business persons, the owners of the shops, and the sellers in the market). Give them their instructions (attached) on the role they will play. Clear up any questions.
- Have them return to their groups - in each group there should be 3 people playing 3 different roles. ***It is important they not share what their role is with the others and not to talk before the negotiation starts. Remind the observers to pay close attention to what they see happening.***

Facilitation Note: If you want to make the role play more realistic, ask what the average price of an orange, or similar fruit, is. Once you have a price, participants have a starting point to simulate bargaining at the market.

In small groups:

- Once the participants receive instructions, the role play begins in the small groups with each participant playing her role following the instructions (below), trying to make it as realistic as possible. The role play lasts **for approximately 10 minutes.**

In plenary:

- With groups still in place:
 - Ask the groups that **did not reach an agreement** how the exercise went for the businesspersons, the owners of shops, and the sellers. What affected the outcome?
 - Then ask the observers from each group what they perceived.
 - Finally, ask the groups that **did reach an agreement** how they struck a bargain.
 - And lastly, ask the observers in those groups for their observations.



- Ask everyone to reflect on what they learned about how to reach agreements, and ways of identifying the interests and needs of the parties. In this case, for instance some needed only the seeds and others the pulp of the fruit, and the seller was mainly interested in selling her merchandise.
- As facilitator, you will want to emphasize some key points such as how possibilities expand when we negotiate based on our interests and needs and when we clearly present and share those interests and needs with others (as long as both parties are genuinely seeking a solution and power differentials do not interfere with getting to an agreement). The following box contains some additional pointers:

1. *We often think of a solution to a conflict and believe that it is the only solution, so we turn it into a hard and fast position.*
2. *When we seek to solve conflicts, we limit ourselves if we deal with or analyze disputes only from the point of view of fixed positions. If we negotiate based on people's needs and interests, we multiply the possible solutions because frequently there are several solutions to meet everybody's needs.*
3. *To do this, people in conflict have to put aside their fixed positions and solutions and focus on common interests and needs.*
4. *We must be willing to identify and share needs and basic interests. This can be difficult, because mistrust, secrets, and discretion dominate in the midst of a conflict.*
5. *We should develop the ability to listen to each other and consider mutual needs.*
6. *As women, it is important for us to develop new ways of relating among ourselves that encourage collaboration rather than division, mistrust or discrediting other women's intelligence, capabilities and emotions. We have learned this kind of dysfunctional behavior as part of sexist beliefs systems that work to divide and demean us. For this reason, it is very important for women to reach agreements and develop approaches that transform the negative ways we sometimes relate to one another.*



SUPPORT MATERIAL - THE CASE OF WISE FRUIT

Note: Each person gets only a description of their role so they do not know the concerns of the other women.

YOLANDA

You are the owner of a store that processes and sells natural medicinal products. It's a small shop, but it gives you enough income to live with dignity, in addition to providing employment to several other women. In the shop you sell **WISE FRUIT**, a fruit that provides great juice for lowering fever, especially in children. The juice is packed and sold at your store.

You always order **WISE FRUIT** from an intermediary who comes to your city every 15 days. But she just sent a message saying that she can't deliver your order because she has family problems that prevent her from travelling. Your supply of **WISE FRUIT** is almost gone and you must buy more because you have several urgent juice orders that you promised to have ready by tomorrow.

You decide to go to the market to buy fruit. You need at least 30 pieces, but you are worried because in the nearest market there is generally a very limited supply of this special fruit. You are willing to pay up to \$1 for each piece of fruit in order to fulfill the commitment you have, even if you don't make a profit from this sale.



SONIA

You are a businesswoman and wholesale distributor of fruit and vegetable seeds for planting in small areas. You sell these seeds to a cooperative of women on the coast.

The cooperative is an important purchaser of WISE FRUIT because the women use the seeds for planting in several communities and appreciate the fruit's medicinal uses, especially in lowering children's fever. In addition, they sell what is left after distributing the product to coop members and save their earnings in the coop's common fund.

You usually buy WISE FRUIT from an intermediary, but now she has informed you that she cannot sell you the fruit for some time. You are worried because the cooperative is urging you to sell them at least 100 pieces of fruit to distribute the seeds at their next meeting before the rainy season begins.

Faced with this situation, you decide to go to the market to find the only seller of WISE FRUIT. You have only \$150 to buy the 100 pieces of WISE FRUIT.

CARMEN

You sell fruit at the market and, among others, you sell the scarce WISE FRUIT on which you have a monopoly. Most of the time, you sell it at \$1.50. Today is market day and you must sell your entire product because you have to take an aunt to a health center in the city. You want to get the best price in order to cover transportation costs and leave some money at home.