

The Eight-Stage Negotiation Process

From Changingminds.org/disciplines

This is a unique combination framework that puts together the best of many other approaches to negotiation. It is particularly suited to more complex, higher-value and slower negotiations.

1. **Prepare:** Know what you want. Understand them.
2. **Open:** Put your case. Hear theirs.
3. **Argue:** Support your case. Expose theirs.
4. **Explore:** Seek understanding and possibility.
5. **Signal:** Indicate your readiness to work together.
6. **Package:** Assemble potential trades.
7. **Close:** Reach final agreement.
8. **Sustain:** Make sure what is agreed happens.

There are deliberately a larger number of stages in this process as it is designed to break down important activities during negotiation, particularly towards the end. It is an easy trap to try to jump to the end with a solution that is inadequate and unacceptable.

Note also that in practice, you may find variations on this model, for example where there may be loops back to previous stages, stages overlapping, stages running parallel and even out of order.

The bottom line is to use what works. This process is intended to help you negotiate, but do not use it blindly. It is not magic and is not a substitute for thinking. If something does not seem to be working, try to figure out why and either fix the problem or try something else. Although there are commonalities across negotiations, each one is different and the greatest skill is to be able to read the situation in the moment and adapt as appropriate.

Negotiation Mistakes

Negotiation is a difficult art as it requires managing, in real-time, both the other person's mind and your own.

Here are a number of mistakes that negotiators can make (and what you can do about them).

- **Accepting Positions:** Assuming the other person won't change their position.
 - **Accepting Statements:** Assuming what the other person says is wholly true.
 - **Cornering Them:** Giving them no alternative but to fight.
 - **Hurrying:** Negotiating in haste (and repenting at leisure).
 - **Hurting the Relationship:** Getting what you want but making an enemy.
 - **Issue Fixation:** Getting stuck on one issue and missing greater possibilities.
 - **Missing Strengths:** Not realizing the strengths that you actually have.
 - **Misunderstanding Authority:** Assuming that authority and power are synonymous.
 - **Misunderstanding Power:** Thinking one person has all the power.
 - **One Solution:** Thinking there is only one possible solution.
 - **Over-Wanting:** Wanting something too much.
 - **Squeezing Too Much:** Trying to gain every last advantage.
 - **Talking Too Much:** Not gaining the power of information from others.
 - **Thinking in Absolutes:** Assuming that there are only a few possibilities.
 - **The Walk-away Trap:** Becoming too fond of your walk-away option.
 - **Unconditional Concessions:** Giving things away without asking for things in return.
 - **Win-Lose:** Assuming a fixed-pie, win-lose scenario.
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Denial

Description

Denial is simply refusing to acknowledge that an event has occurred. The person affected simply acts as if nothing has happened, behaving in ways that others may see as bizarre.

In its full form, it is totally subconscious, and sufferers may be as mystified by the behavior of people around them as those people are by the behavior of the sufferers. It may also have a significant conscious element, where the sufferer is simply 'turning a blind eye' to an uncomfortable situation.

Example

A man hears that his wife has been killed, and yet refuses to believe it, still setting the table for her and keeping her clothes and other accoutrements in the bedroom.

A person having an affair does not think about pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

People take credit for their successes and find 'good reason' for their failures, blaming the situation, other people, etc.

Alcoholics vigorously deny that they have a problem.

Optimists deny that things may go wrong. Pessimists deny they may succeed.

Discussion

Denial is a form of repression, where stressful thoughts are banned from memory. If I do not think about it, then I do not suffer the associated stress have to deal with it. However, people engaging in Denial can pay a high cost in terms of the psychic energy needed to maintain the denial state.

Repression and Denial are two primary defense mechanisms which everybody uses.

Children find denial easier, as with age, the ego matures and understands more about the "objective reality" it must operate within.

Denial is one of Anna Freud's original defense mechanisms.

So what?

When you appear to deny a situation, then the other person may join you in the denial or may have to handle it in a way that is not as direct as they otherwise might.

Avoidance

Description

In avoidance, we simply find ways of avoiding having to face uncomfortable situations, things or activities. The discomfort, for example, may come from unconscious sexual or aggressive impulses.

Avoidance may include removing oneself physically from a situation. It may also involve finding ways not to discuss or even think about the topic in question.

Example

- I dislike another person at work. I avoid walking past their desk. When people talk about them, I say nothing.
- My son does not like doing homework. Whenever the subject of school comes up, he changes the topic. He also avoids looking directly at me.

Discussion

Avoidance is a simple way of coping by not having to cope. When feelings of discomfort appear, we find ways of not experiencing them.

According to the dynamic theory, avoidance is a major defense mechanism in phobias.

Procrastination is another form of avoidance where we put off to tomorrow those things that we can avoid today.

So what?

To get someone to face what they are avoiding, you may have to corner them or otherwise present them with a situation where they are unable to avoid the situation. If the discomfort is very strong, they may fight back hard, so be careful.

You can also use avoidance to persuade a person to do something. Give them a choice of two actions, one of which is something you know that they tend to avoid or which is likely to be less desirable. They will pick the path you want in order to avoid the less desirable way.

Compartmentalization

Description

Compartmentalization is a 'divide and conquer' process for separating thoughts that will conflict with one another. This may happen when they are different beliefs or even when there are conflicting values.

Example

- A person who is very religious and also a scientist holds the opposing beliefs in different cognitive compartments, such that when they are in church, they can have blind faith, whilst when they are in the laboratory, they question everything.
- There is sometimes honor amongst thieves, where together they act as honest people. Thieves also may be very honest in their family lives.
- My son is an angel in school and a demon at home.

Discussion

Compartmentalizing is building walls to prevent inner conflict. To some extent, we all compartmentalize our lives, living different value sets in the different groups to which we belong. Thus we may be ruthless at work but loving at home. We rationalize this by explaining that 'that's just the way it is'.

So what?

To help someone become more integrated as a person, one therapeutic technique is to take two chairs and have the person alternate between the two seats as they have a conversation with themselves, seeking to understand the other 'persona' and hence build passageways between them and become better friends with themselves (or at least gain greater acceptance and understanding). In time, the walls may crumble.

Where there are split personalities and there is a desire to extinguish one of them, then take the person to a higher level where they can see the common intent of both sides of the wall and how one side has mistakenly adopted the wrong path.

To get someone to do something that they would not normally do, help them build a new compartment in which to do it. Make as much different in this compartment as possible, including location, clothing, language, etc.

Idealization

Description

Idealization is the over-estimation of the desirable qualities and underestimation of the limitations of a desired thing. We also tend to idealize those things that we have chosen or acquired.

The opposite of Idealization is Demonization, where something that is not desired or disliked has its weak points exaggerated and its strong points played down.

Example

- A teenager in awe of a rock star idealizes their idol, imagining them to have a perfect life, to be kind and thoughtful, and so on. They ignore the star's grosser habits and rough background.
- A person has bought an exotic foreign holiday. They dream about how perfect their vacation will be, not thinking about insects, heat, crime etc.
- I buy a sports car and look admiringly at its sleek lines. I ignore the fact that it drinks fuel and is rather uncomfortable.
- A person in a religious cult idealizes the cult and its leader, assuming they are perfect and that the outside world is very poor in comparison.

Discussion

Idealizing allows us to confirm our decisions as being wise and intelligent as we play up the good things we have chosen and downplay detracting factors. We thus cope with potentially dissonant thoughts that we have made a wrong decision.

It also makes us feel better to pay attention to things we desire that spend our time thinking about less pleasant things.

Playing up the good things and pushing down the bad things also creates a [contrast](#) that makes the good things seem even better.

So what?

When selling something, focus on the good things, idealizing what you are selling and the benefits that it will bring. Note, however, that if this sales talk goes too far, it may lead to disappointment that result in betrayal effects.

To persuade someone away from something they are idealizing, show them lots of unavoidable hard evidence that breaks the idealized perceptions.

Rationalization

Description

When something happens that we find difficult to accept, then we will make up a logical reason why it has happened.

The target of rationalization is usually something that we have done, such as being unkind to another person. It may also be used when something happens independent of us which causes us discomfort, such as when a friend is unkind to us.

We not only rationalize actions and the things we have done, we also find reason for our [beliefs](#), [models](#), [values](#) and other inner structures and thoughts. These systems are often implied in rationalization statements.

We rationalize to ourselves. We also find it very important to rationalize to other people, even those we do not know.

Example

- A person evades paying taxes and then rationalizes it by talking about how the government wastes money (and how it is better for people to keep what they can).
- A man buys a expensive car and then tells people his old car was very unreliable, very unsafe, etc.
- A person fails to get good enough results to get into a chosen university and then says that they didn't want to go there anyway.
- A parent punishes a child and says that it is for the child's 'own good'.
- I trip and fall over in the street. I tell a passer-by that I have recently been ill.

- A person explains their religious beliefs as 'God's will'.

Discussion

When a person does something of which the moral super ego disapproves, then the ego seeks to defend itself by adding reasons that make the action acceptable to the super ego. Thus we are able to do something that is outside our values and get away with it without feeling too guilty.

When we rationalize our thoughts and inner systems, we may do this through other systems. Hence we may say our belief in capital punishment is because murders 'deserve what they give'.

Rationalization is related to our need to explain what happens and to maintain consistency between and amongst actions and thoughts. Our need for esteem also leads us to rationalize to others.

Rationalization happens with bullies and victims. The bully rationalizes what they have done by saying that their victim 'deserved it'. Sometimes the victims think this too.

Self-Serving Bias uses rationalization when it leads to taking more credit for success than we deserve and blame others for our failures.

Repression

Description

Repression involves placing uncomfortable thoughts in relatively inaccessible areas of the subconscious mind. Thus when things occur that we are unable to cope with now, we push them away, either planning to deal with them at another time or hoping that they will fade away on their own accord.

The level of 'forgetting' in repression can vary from a temporary abolition of uncomfortable thoughts to a high level of amnesia, where events that caused the anxiety are buried very deep.

Repressed memories do not disappear. They can have an accumulative effect and reappear as unattributable anxiety or dysfunctional behavior. A high level of repression can cause a high level of anxiety or dysfunction, although this may also be caused by the repression of one particularly traumatic incident.

Repressed memories may appear through subconscious means and in altered forms, such as dreams or slips of the tongue ('Freudian slips').

Example

- A child who is abused by a parent later has no recollection of the events, but has trouble forming relationships.
- A woman who found childbirth particularly painful continues to have children (and each time the level of pain is surprising).
- An optimist remembers the past with a rosy glow and constantly repeats mistakes.
- A man has a phobia of spiders but cannot remember the first time he was afraid of them.
- A person greets another with 'pleased to beat you' (the repressed idea of violence toward the other person creeping through).

Discussion

Repression (sometimes called *motivated forgetting*) is a primary ego defense mechanism since the other ego mechanisms use it in tandem with other methods.

Repression is unconscious. When we deliberately and consciously try to push away thoughts, this is suppression.

It is not all bad. If all uncomfortable memories were easily brought to mind we would be faced with a non-stop pain of reliving them.