

Excerpts from Getting to Yes with Yourself

By William Ury

I came to realize that, however difficult others can sometimes be, the biggest obstacle of all lies on *this* side of the table. It is not easy to see or even admit, but the person who stands most in the way of getting what I *truly* want in life is none other than the person I see every morning in the mirror.

William Ury, author

The First Negotiation

I have come to realize that the first and most important negotiation we ever conduct is the negotiation with ourselves.

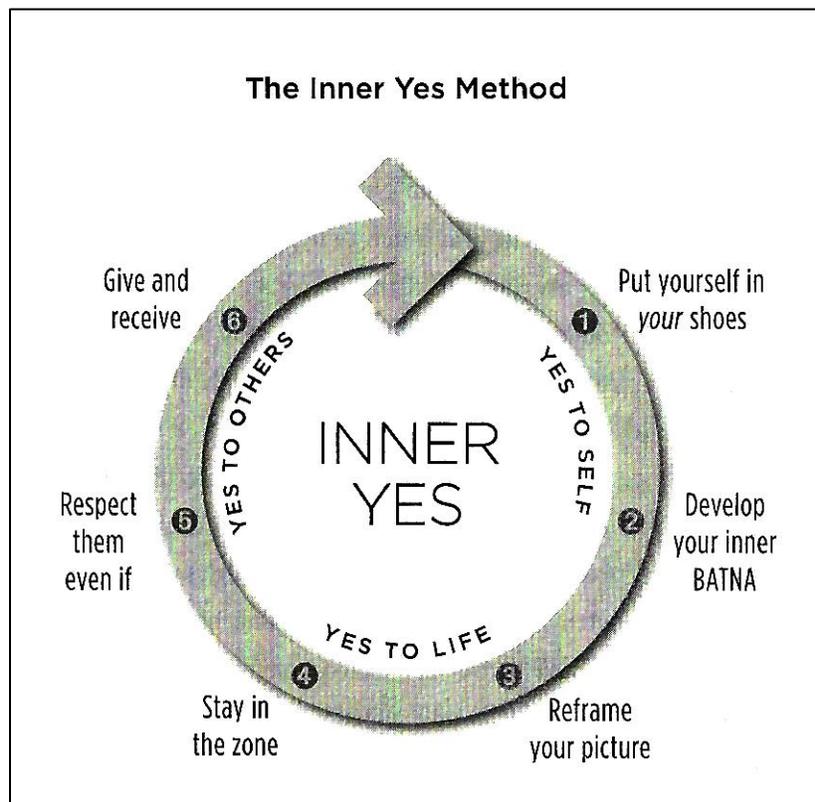
Getting to yes with yourself prepares the way for getting to yes with others. *Getting to Yes with Yourself* is about changing the inner game so that we can then change the outer game. After all, how can we really expect to get to yes with others, particularly in challenging situations, if we haven't first gotten to yes with ourselves?

Six Challenging Steps

In brief, the six steps to getting to yes with yourself are as follows:

1. **Put Yourself In Your Shoes.** The first step is to understand your worthiest opponent, yourself. It is all too common to fall into the trap of continually judging yourself. The challenge instead is to do the opposite and listen empathetically for underlying needs, just as you would with a valued partner or client.
2. **Develop Your Inner BATNA.** Take responsibility for your life and relationships. You do this by developing your inner BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Settlement). Make a commitment to yourself to take care of your needs independently of what the other does or does not do.
3. **Reframe Your Picture.** Change how you see your life. Create your own independent and sufficient source of contentment. It is to see life as being on your side even when it seems unfriendly.
4. **Stay in the Zone.** Don't get caught up in resentment about the past or anxiety about the future. Do the opposite and stay in the present moment, the only place where you have power to experience true satisfaction as well as to change the situation for the better.

5. **Respect Them Even If.** It is tempting to meet rejection, personal attack or exclusion with the same response. Surprise others with respect and inclusion even if they are difficult.
6. **Give and Receive.** It is all too easy to fall into the win-lose trap and to focus on meeting only your needs. The final challenge is to change the game to a win-win-win approach by giving first instead of taking.



1

Put Yourself in *Your* Shoes

FROM SELF-JUDGMENT TO SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Listening to yourself can reveal what you really want. At the same time, it can clear your mind so that you have the mental and emotional space to be able to listen to the other person and understand what he or she really wants.

Our natural tendency is to judge ourselves critically and to ignore or reject our own felt needs. How many of us regularly listen to ourselves with empathy and understanding – in the supportive way that a trusted friend can?

See Yourself from the Balcony

If you observe yourself and others in moments of stress during negotiation and conflict, you will notice how easily people become triggered by the other person's words, tone of voice, and actions.

When we react, we give away our power – our power to influence the other person constructively and to change the situation for the better. When we react, we are, in effect, saying no to our interests, no to ourselves.

But we have a choice. We don't need to react. Instead we should *go to the balcony*. The balcony is a metaphor for a mental and emotional place of perspective, calm, and self-control. If life is a stage and we are all actors, then the balcony is a place from which we can see the entire play unfolding with greater clarity. To observe ourselves, it is valuable to go to the balcony at all times, and especially before, during, and after any problematic conversation or negotiation.

See if you can spot your own crossroads, the moment in which you can choose between an impulsive reaction and a considered response that advances your true interests. Mastering the skill of observation requires you observe the phenomenon with detachment and an open mind.

Listen with Empathy

The majority of our thoughts, as high as 80 percent, are thought to be negative: obsessing about mistakes, battling guilt, or thinking about inadequacies. Each negative thought is a no to yourself. There is a saying that goes, "If you talked to your friends the way you talk to yourself, you wouldn't have any." Instead of talking negatively to yourself, try to listen to yourself with respect and positive attention.

One of the great benefits of listening to yourself before you enter into a problematic conversation or negotiation is that it clears your mind so that you can then listen far more easily to others.

Uncover Your Needs

The magic question to uncover your true interests and needs is: "Why?" "Why do I want this?" One valuable practice is to keep asking yourself why – as many times as necessary – until you get down to your bedrock need. The deeper you go in uncovering your underlying needs and interests, the more likely you are to invent creative options that can satisfy your interests.

From Self-Judgment to Self-Understanding

It is often not that easy to put yourself in your own shoes – to see yourself from the balcony, to listen to yourself with empathy and to uncover your underlying needs.

Putting yourself in your shoes helps you become your friend rather than your opponent when it comes to negotiating with others. It helps you not only to understand yourself, but to accept yourself just as you are. If self-judgment is no to self, self-acceptance is a yes to self, perhaps the greatest gift we can give ourselves. The journey from self-judgment to self-understanding takes hard and continual work.

2

Develop Your Inner BATNA **FROM BLAME TO SELF-RESPONSIBILITY**

The blame game is the core pattern of almost every destructive conflict I have ever witnessed. The costs of the blame game are huge. It escalates disputes. It prevents us from resolving them. It undermines our power: when we blame others for what is wrong it undermines our power by dwelling on their power and our victimhood. We need to reclaim our power to change the situation for the better.

The opposite of the blame game is to take responsibility. By responsibility, I mean “responsibility” – the ability to respond constructively to a situation facing us, treating it as ours to handle. Taking responsibility means taking responsibility for your life and your relationships. And, perhaps most important, it means making an unconditional commitment to take care of your needs.

Own Your Needs

The greatest source of power in a negotiation is your BATNA – your Best Alternative To a Negotiated Settlement. Your BATNA is your best course of action for satisfying your interests if you cannot reach agreement with the other side.

Faced with a negotiating counterpart who appears more powerful, many people struggle to equalize the power balance as there may be no obvious good alternative. But regardless, we can make a strong unconditional commitment to ourselves to take care of our deepest needs, no matter what other people do or don't do. That commitment is our inner BATNA.

From Blame to Self-Responsibility

Your inner BATNA is your commitment to stop blaming yourself, others and life itself for your dissatisfactions no matter what. It is your commitment to take responsibility for meeting your true needs.

In the end, each of us must answer the question, “Who is responsible for meeting my core psychological needs?” If we answer, “someone else,” we will give our power away to them. But if we answer, “ourselves,” we can reclaim the power to change our life and our future.

3

Reframe Your Picture **FROM UNFRIENDLY TO FRIENDLY**

Reframing is the capacity each of us has to give a different interpretation or meaning to the situation. In every challenging conversation, we have a choice.

- Do we approach the conversation as an adversarial contest in which one party wins and the other loses?
- Or do we approach it as an opportunity for collaborative problem solving in which both sides can benefit?

What is our internal picture of life? What is our working assumption? Can we think, act, and conduct our relationships as if the universe is essentially a friendly place and life is, in fact, on our side?

Make your own Happiness

Research indicates that the way we see the world can make us feel better. We may think that happiness is something to be pursued outside us, but it is actually something that we make inside.

“I have come to realize that people are as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Abraham Lincoln

True enduring satisfaction starts inside. The less dependent we feel on others to satisfy our needs for happiness, the more mature and truly satisfying our relationships with others are likely to be. The less needy we feel, the less conflict there will be and the easier it will be for us to get to yes in challenging situations.

Appreciate Life's Lessons

Being happy comes from feeling grateful for life. There may be no better gateway to happiness than cultivating our gratitude.

From Unfriendly to Friendly

Life can be extremely challenging at times, but we can choose whether or not to see the challenge as being ultimately in our favor. We can choose to learn from these challenges, even the most difficult ones.

We have the power to choose our basic attitude toward life. Instead of saying *no* to life, seeing life as unfriendly, we can choose to say *yes* to life, seeing life as our friend. In making this fundamental choice, we are able to shape our lives and our negotiations for the better.

4

Stay in the Zone

FROM RESISTANCE TO ACCEPTANCE

If we want to get to yes in a sensitive situation, the key is to look for the present opportunity. I find, there is an opening if we are attentive enough to see it. But it is all too easy for us to miss. It is so easy for us to be distracted, to be thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Yet it is only in the present moment when we can intentionally change the direction of the conversation toward an agreement.

As interesting and informative as the past or future might be, the power to transform the conflict lay in the present moment. If we are to spot the present opportunity, our internal focus naturally needs to be in the present moment. Doing so makes us less likely to react, helps us pay attention to possible openings, and accesses our natural creativity so that we can reach mutually satisfying agreements.

Accept the Past

Holding on to the past is not only self-destructive because it distracts us from reaching a mutually satisfying agreement, but it also takes away our joy and even harms our health, including the joy and health of those around us.

The first beneficiary of forgiveness is ourselves. Resentment and anger tend to consume us and hurt us perhaps much more than even they hurt the other person.

The most important person to forgive is oneself. Without doubt, at some point each of us has felt regret, guilt, shame, self-hatred, and self-blame for all the ways in which we have broken promises to ourselves and hurt ourselves as well as others.

Trust the Future

While keeping an eye on the future can be useful, worrying about it continually only takes us away from the present moment. But what I've learned over the years is that the vast majority of our fears are baseless.

The alternative to fear is trust. By that I don't mean the belief that there will be no challenges or painful experiences. Rather, I mean the confidence that you will be able to deal with the challenges that come your way.

When you are anxious about the future ask yourself this question: *What is the worst thing that can happen here?* By facing your worst fears from a place of clarity, you'll be able to relax and to stay in the zone.

Embrace the Present

It is the present moment where we can make positive changes. It is being present and spotting the present opportunities in our negotiations that we can most easily get to yes with others.

Resisting our current circumstances often prolongs the misery, sometimes indefinitely. It is not easy, of course, but we can choose to limit our suffering through gradually learning to let go of our no – our resistance – and saying yes – learning to accept life as it is.

From Resistance to Acceptance

Accepting life means saying yes to the past, letting go of lingering resentments and grievances. It means saying yes to the future, letting go of needless worries and replacing fear with trust. And it means saying yes to the present, letting go of our expectations and appreciating what we have in the moment.

5

Respect Them Even If **FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION**

I've long noticed that the cheapest concession you can make, the one that costs you least and yields the most, is to give respect. To respect simply means to give positive attention and to treat the other with the dignity with which you would like to be treated.

Giving respect may be the last thing we feel like giving. We may think that they do not deserve our respect and that they need to earn it. They may not be respecting us, so why should we respect them? If we feel rejected, we naturally reject back.

It only takes one person to change their attitude to respect which changes the tone and outcome of a difficult conversation. That person could be us. Respect can breed respect.

To offer respect, we don't need to approve of the other person's behavior, nor do we need to like that individual. We just need to make the conscious choice to treat each person with dignity that is every human being's birthright. Respect is essentially yes to others, not to their demands, but rather to their basic humanity.

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

The best way to listen to others is with full positive attention and regard. We should practice the art of listening to others from within their frame of reference, from their points of view. We should listen not just to the content of what is being said, but also to the human being behind the content.

I find that the simple act of imagining myself in the shoes of another person is a more powerful tool than it may seem. What does the world look like through that individual's eyes? What does it feel like to be that person? If I had lived his or her life, how would I act or react?

Respect Them Even If They Reject You

What if the person on the other side of the table rejects us, as happens so often in conflict situations? It is natural for us to reject them. In the face of rejection, do the opposite of what you at first feel like doing. Instead of rejecting others, surprise them with respect. Take the lead and change the cycle of mutual rejection into a cycle of mutual respect.

Accepting those who reject us doesn't mean saying yes to their demands. It can often mean saying no, but in a positive manner that acknowledges the other person's inherent dignity.

By showing respect, we are more likely to receive respect. By accepting, we are more likely to be accepted. By including, we are more likely to be included. If we can say yes to the basic dignity of others, getting to yes becomes a lot easier and our relationships at home, at work, and in the world become more productive and satisfying.

6

Give and Receive

FROM WIN-LOSE TO WIN-WIN-WIN

I believe that the process of getting to yes with ourselves allows us – and indeed asks us – to aim for an even more audacious goal. It invites us to pursue “win-win-win” outcomes, victories not just for us and the other side, but also for the larger whole – the family, the workplace, the nation, and even the world.

The key to finding win-win-win solutions that serve everyone is to be able to change the game from taking to giving. By taking, I mean claiming value only for yourself, whereas by giving I mean creating value for others, not just yourself. Giving lies at the heart of cooperation.

It is so tempting, particularly in conflicts, to focus just on claiming value for ourselves rather than creating value for others as well as ourselves. The opportunity to change the game to win-win-win lies in our hands. We can lead the way by examining and shifting our own attitude.

Give for Mutual Gain

The most successful negotiators I know tend to be people who focus on addressing the interests and needs of their counterparts at the same time as looking after their own needs. In doing so, they find ways to create value and expand the pie for both sides and end up generally with better

agreements than people who just try to claim as much as possible for themselves at the expense of others.

Give for Pleasure and Meaning

When we discover the joy of giving, we give because we feel moved to give. In the first stage of giving, we may give to others simply in order to receive. We may treat the relationship with the other person like a business transaction. In the second stage of giving, however, we give without expecting a direct tangible return.

Giving for the pleasure of giving is very different from giving out of obligation. When we feel obliged to give, we rarely feel much pleasure and we often end up feeling unhappy.

In contrast, giving that is genuine and freely chosen can bring us enduring inner satisfaction, precisely because it meets our deepest need to be useful and connected to others, because it allows us to make a difference in the world of others, and because it just makes us feel good.

Conclusion

Each one of the six steps helps us to transform the win-lose mindset into a win-win-win mindset. The crowning move is to shift our basic underlying attitude toward others from taking to giving. By changing our basic default mode to giving, not only can we get to yes with ourselves, experiencing inner satisfaction, but we will also find it easier to get to yes with others, achieving outer success. Thus begins a circle of giving and receiving that has no end.