

Work On Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Almost every conversation includes negotiation. If you listen closely, you'll hear a lot of pleasant disagreements disguised as idle chatter. Disagreements are healthy. It's been said that if two people agree on everything all the time, only one person is doing the thinking. But what happens when your disagreements get in the way of productivity? After a couple years of quarantines, social distancing, and mostly digital interaction with other people, most workers are stepping into the post-pandemic stages of being 'back-in-person'. You might feel like you have to re-learn how to communicate and collaborate with others, which can be a real challenge. We know that striving for a Win/Win result is the best solution, but how do you get there? Here are a few ideas.

Work Together, Not Against. First, both parties must have a clear idea of what winning means to them. Next, you should take turns explaining what you want and everyone should be able to see the problem from the other's point of view. Identify the key issues and concerns from everyone involved. Determine what results would constitute a fully acceptable situation and write down every possibility. Finally, work together to identify possible new options to achieve what you both want. Remember that one person will not achieve success at the expense of another. There are plenty of acceptable solutions if you'll just stick with it until you find them.

Separate People From The Problem. Avoid identifying the other person as your "opponent". Change your mindset from "me against you" to "me and you against the problem". Focus on the issue at hand, and try to ignore personality differences. Be aware of three factors: perception, emotion, and communication. Examine and acknowledge your emotions, and ask yourself why you feel the way you do. Make sure that your communication is clear and precise to avoid misunderstandings.

Focus on Interests, Not Positions. People are seldom difficult just for the sake of it, and there are always valid differences sitting behind conflicting positions. The way that each person sees the issue may be influenced by many factors, such as their values, beliefs, status, responsibilities, and cultural background. Keep the conversation courteous and avoid attributing blame. Once everyone knows that their interests have been considered, they are more likely to be receptive to different points of view and compromise.

While working, playing, and planning, make a conscious effort to keep the needs and desires of others in the forefront of your mind. Use active listening techniques such as looking directly at the speaker, listening carefully, and allowing each person to finish before you respond. Stay open to the idea that a completely new position may exist and use the negotiation process to explore your options.