

Meditate & Mediate

Table of Contents

Staying Connected with Ourselves as We Connect to Others	2
Preparing for a Negotiation: Balcony	6
Preparing for a Negotiation: BATNA.....	14
Preparing for a Negotiation: Listening	18
Reframing: Moving the Spotlight on to Constructive Options	24
Q&A: Building Up the Power to Get Past the Other's No.....	30
Q&A: Recognizing and Neutralizing a Manipulative Tactic	33
Q&A: Shifting the Focus from Blame to Solutions.....	34
Q&A: Empathizing with Victims on Both Ends of the Barrel.....	35
Begin Meditation	37
End of Meditation.....	39
Q&A: Hosting Ourselves in Order to Host the Other	39
Q&A: Witnessing Trauma Without Dissociating	41
Q&A: The Emergence of Our Inner Third Side	42
Q&A: Paying Attention to Internal Dynamics First.....	44

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William: Well, a real welcome to everyone. I'm very mindful that, as Thomas indicated in our last class, that we're encircling the globe here. There are many, many participants on this call—hundreds, there's over 600 in the class altogether, from 41 different countries—we span the Earth a little bit, like a third side, community is in a circle, holding the Earth with our hands, with our feet, with our presence.

As Nicholas mentioned, today is the moment to really reflect a moment on the journey thus far that we've been on, which has been a journey that has been largely focused inside—on our inner self-regulation, on our inner self-contact, on our inner presence—that prepares us to come into contact with others, which is the bridge that we're about to cross today. That bridge from the focus on the inner to the focus on the outer, the focus on the people around us, the conflicts that we may be engaged in, whether at home or at work, or in the community, or in the larger world. We are a third side, as it were, holding this question of how humanity can begin to heal itself, starting from the micro all the way up to the macro.

As you remember, we've been considering situations that are very close to us, but also macro situations like the current existential crisis that we have between the United States and North Korea, what they call the DPRK, and we're holding all of those conflicts in our minds. What I would like to do with you today is to really take a moment to reflect back on our last session as we look into this session.

If I could ask for a beautiful graphic by Mathias to be put up just so we can talk a little bit about where we've come from as we embark on the next step. Last time, just again to reflect, we're here all around the world, there's a lovely globe there in the left top hand corner, and we're part, in some sense, of the immune system of the world—and we talked about that, about how we're a collective body, and even as a group, we're a microcosm of that collective body.

Question was, how do we feel and sense the planet? How do we train our capacities to become a global facilitator, what Thomas calls a 'global social witness' but I call it a 'third sider'—which is our most ancient human heritage, our birth right, every culture has it—of circling around the conflict to create a container within which that conflict can be constructively handled?

We talked last time, too, about what are aiming for, is it conflict resolution? We talked a little bit about how, actually, conflict resolution can sometimes lead us to think that we're ending the conflict when in fact, often times what we're doing is we're transforming that conflict. The conflict is part of life, conflict has an ongoing quality, and the real challenge, the real opportunity that we have is to change the form of the conflict from destructive, from abuse, from violence, to constructive, to listening, to dialogue, to negotiation.

That's the key opportunity, and I had a chance to talk a little bit about... to ask the question, to invite you to take the situation, as we'll do again today, but to ask: what is it you really want? To go to the balcony and ask yourself: what is it that you really want? We talked about power and where power comes from, and we'll be reviewing that today.

[00:05:00]

We talked and, in the very end, questions came up around how do we build trust. It was a, really, very rich session, and it was a session, as the previous sessions have been, that have been focused on how do we cultivate our own ability to stay connected with ourselves.

Staying Connected with Ourselves as We Connect to Others

Now, we're going to focus on how do we build a bridge so that we can stay connected with ourselves as we connect with others, as we connect with others with whom we may be in conflict or with whom we may be mediators or third parties with parties who are in conflict with each other. How do we do that? As I was mentioning before, the opportunity that I've had, actually, in the last decades, is I feel like I've had a front seat on a revolution that's taking place around the planet. It's a quiet revolution. It's a silent revolution that accompanies the knowledge revolution, that accompanies the communication revolution, and it's a revolution in the way in which we as individuals, as organizations, as communities, as societies, the way in which we make decisions.

Because traditionally a... no, a generation or more ago, the main form, predominant form of making decisions was very much top down. The people on top of the pyramids of power, they would give the orders, and the people on the bottom would follow them. Now, as part of the evolution of the planet, those pyramids of power are beginning to collapse, and most of us are working in situations which more resemble networks, where essentially, to get our jobs done, to get what we need in this world, we are literally dependent on dozens, if not hundreds or thousands or more, human beings and organizations over whom we exercise no direct control. In order to get what we want, we're compelled to negotiate.

And negotiation, the way I would define it very, very simply and very broadly, is the act of back and forth communication. You're trying to reach an agreement with the other side. You may have some interests which are in tension, other interests which you hold in common, like an ongoing relationship, and the question is, how do you reach agreement in those circumstances? And what I found is that, all over the world now, there's this revolution—what might [be] called the 'negotiation revolution'—which is that the form of decision making is flattening from a vertical form of decision making to a more horizontal form of decision making, to shared decision making, to participatory decision making.

And we're one of the very first, I think we're the first generation to really face this in all its complexity around the globe, which makes us pioneers in this process. What I'd like to do is just invite you for a moment to think about your own experience as a negotiator, as it were. Sometimes we don't think of ourselves as a negotiator, but in fact that's what we are. We're all engaged in that action of back and forth communication, trying to reach agreement. Think about, in the course of your day, for a moment, who do you find yourself negotiating with? Who do you find yourself communicating with, trying to reach some kind of agreement? If you think about it for a moment—in the family, you may negotiate with your partner and your parents, your children, your siblings, your cousins and so on; and then at work, think about negotiating with your colleagues and your co-workers, with your bosses or boards, with employees or people who may report to you, with clients or people that you work with, or vendors—think about all the variety of people that you negotiate with in the course of your day, and now ask yourself the question, how much time do you think you spend engaged in back and forth communication, trying to reach agreement with all of those people in the course of your day, trying to reach some kind of agreement, in other words, engaged in negotiation?

If you had to just make an estimate of what percentage of your time, what fraction of your time do you spend negotiating, what would you say it was? Think about it for a moment. What percentage of your time?

[00:10:00]

When I ask that question, a lot of people say, “Wow, that’s 25% of my time,” or, “50% of my time.” Or some people would even go longer, “75% of my time,” and then people add, “Okay, if I negotiate with myself, then, at night...” Then you realize that, in fact, we’re negotiating from the time we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed at night, and even during our dreams we’re negotiating. We may not always think of it as a negotiation, but in that broader sense of the term, we’re always negotiating.

Let me ask you one other question. If you think about the last five or ten years of your life, of your work and so on, do you think that you are negotiating less than you used to, about the same, or more? If you’re like most of the people I’ve talked to, I think the answer is always more. There’s more and more negotiation that’s going on. That is the impact of the negotiation revolution that I was talking about, and I see that in every country that I visit, everywhere we go, there’s more and more negotiation—and with negotiation, of course, there’s more and more... there’s, also, more and more conflict, of course, in some ways. We’re navigating these times, and as I read your questions and—good, many of you have submitted very, very interesting questions—I can see we’re dealing with this challenge as humanity, now, with how do we reach agreement in the difficult circumstances, the intense times in which we find ourselves, whether that’s in a family situation or a work situation, or whether that’s in the world at large.

What I’m going to ask you to do in this session today is, as I did in the last session, I’m going to ask you to take a situation that you’re currently facing, some negotiation that you’re currently engaged in, some conflict that you may be involved in—it may be in the family, it may be at work, it may be in the community, or it might be in the larger society—take some situation that you’re currently facing and have that in mind as I lead you on a journey of how you might approach that situation. I know there are a lot of difficult situations, I’ve seen them in your questions, so have a situation in mind. Think about what the issue is, what is it that you want, what is it that they want. Go on and have a situation in mind. I think you’re going to get more value if you have at least one situation that you’re currently working through. My hope is, by the end of our session today, you might have an idea or two, a new idea or two about how to approach that situation. It might also lead to some very good questions.

And while you do that, while you're selecting that situation, let me ask you one question. If you think about there being two kinds of negotiations, two kinds of conflicts that we are involved in—one is the internal conflict, like inside the family, inside the organization, with your co-workers and your colleagues, and then are the ones that are outside: with clients, for example, with vendors, with banks, with government agencies, whoever you have that's outside of the organization. I'd be curious just for you to think about, have you selected an internal situation or have you selected an external situation—and clearly, a lot of situations may actually have an element of both—but it's interesting, then, to think about, which personally do you find more challenging, the external situations that you have to engage in, or is it the internal ones, inside the family, inside the organization? Clearly both can be difficult, but it's interesting, when I ask people that question, "Which personally—if you had to make a broad generalization—do you find more challenging, the internal situations or the external ones?" most people say the internal ones are more challenging. Now, why would that be? After all, if you're, say, at work, it's people who are supposedly on the same team, with the same objectives, you're all part of the same family, but oftentimes I find that's true. It's the internal situations that are more challenging, in fact, than the external ones.

[00:15:00]

Which is why, in fact, the most internal situation that we face is the one inside of ourselves, and those are perhaps the most challenging, the negotiations we have with ourselves, which is why this course is so essential, I think, to really start from the process of regulating ourselves, of dealing with our own issues so that we can then better deal with issues outside of ourselves, getting to yes with ourselves so that we can get to yes with others, listening to ourselves so that we can better listen to others.

While you have those situations in mind for a moment, I'm going to ask you, if you like, to go to the question board here—and I see some questions coming up here—but if you wouldn't mind, just so that I can, we can weave these questions into our session today, wouldn't mind just putting up, "How do I deal..." Thinking about your situation, you might ask a question like, "How do I deal with this situation?" "How do I deal with this situation where there is high emotion?" "How do I deal with the situation where there is a lot of ego involved?" "How do I deal with the situation that... where I morally disagree with the other side?" If you wouldn't mind just putting up some of those, then I'll have those in mind and I can tailor them. I can integrate them into our session today.

Yeah, that's great. Exactly.

"How do I deal with those who don't want to talk about it, who just disengage?"

"How do I deal with the situation [that] seems very confusing?"

"How do I deal with multiple stakeholders?"

Again, we're just getting a sense of... Yeah, lots of good questions.

"How do I deal with the situation where they see me as having all the power?"

"How do I deal with the situation where there's family member who reacts so emotionally?"

"How do I stay cool when I'm feeling threatened?"

"How do I deal with somebody who doesn't want to listen to me?"

These are really good.

"How can I stay present?"

"How do I deal with someone whom I find personally repugnant?"

"How do we begin when there's been a lot of hurt, where there's a lot of feelings, when there's trauma?"

These are very good. It gives a sense of where you are. Very helpful.

"If I'm angry, how do I negotiate in those situations? Do I express my feelings?"

I think we're going to have a very rich session today, it looks like. I could see even more. Good. Let's dive in for a moment.

Preparing for a Negotiation: Balcony

What I'm going to suggest is what we're looking for, the ideal to me, what we're looking for, which is not easy in these very difficult situations, is something which starts with a win inside. Something where we... a lot of these situations where we can have an inner victory inside of ourselves or we can get to yes with ourselves, it starts there.

Looks for a win-win situation, a win-win solution, something that's good for us, good for the other side, good for both sides in a difficult situation—which is not so easy. Ultimately we want a win-win-win, which is to realize it's not just a win for both sides, but a win for the whole, a win for the family, a win for the organization, a win for the society. For example, in the North Korea situation, it's not just something that would be satisfactory to North Korea, satisfactory to the United States, but also something that would be a win for the world really is what we're looking for. That's the objective, that's the audacious objective we're looking for—and how do you do that in these very, very difficult situations like the ones that you've just put on the question board?



Slide 1

What I'd like to suggest to you is, again, based on my experiences. If there's a single key distinction I found in trying to change the game from what may be a very conflictual or confrontational situation into a more cooperative mode where we can look for a win for us, a win with the other side, and a win for the whole as well, a triple win, the key, in your negotiating situation here, the key is, the theme is to focus on interests.

Your negotiating situation

Who are the **parties**

What is the **issue**

What do **you** want

What do **they** want



Slide 2

And the key distinction I find successful negotiators do is the distinction, and we talked about this a little bit earlier, is to distinguish between the *positions* that we take in the negotiation, the concrete demands or stances that each side takes, and the underlying *interests* which are the underlying motivations.

[00:20:00]

Really going into the individual, what are the needs? What are the desires? What are the fears? What are the concerns? What are the aspirations? That distinction is key.

Let me just... There is a, just to illustrate that distinction, one of, maybe, the leaders that... one of, really, the mothers of modern management theory was a woman who lived in Boston over a century ago, and her name was Mary Parker Follett. She once gave a story that, I think, gets to the essence of positions and interests. She was once in a library there in Boston, in a Harvard library in the university, and she was watching two students get into a quarrel with each other. One wanted the window open and the other wanted it closed, so the first student would go and open the window, the other student would go and shut the window. Open the window, shut the window, kind of classic conflict like that, the positions being “open window” and “closed window”. She watched as the librarian came over, and the librarian asked the first student, “Well, why do you want the window open?” That’s the magical question we have to ask, is the ‘why’ question. “Why do you want the window open?” And he said, “Well, I want some fresh air.” From the “open window”, which was the position, you go to “fresh air”, which is the underlying interest.

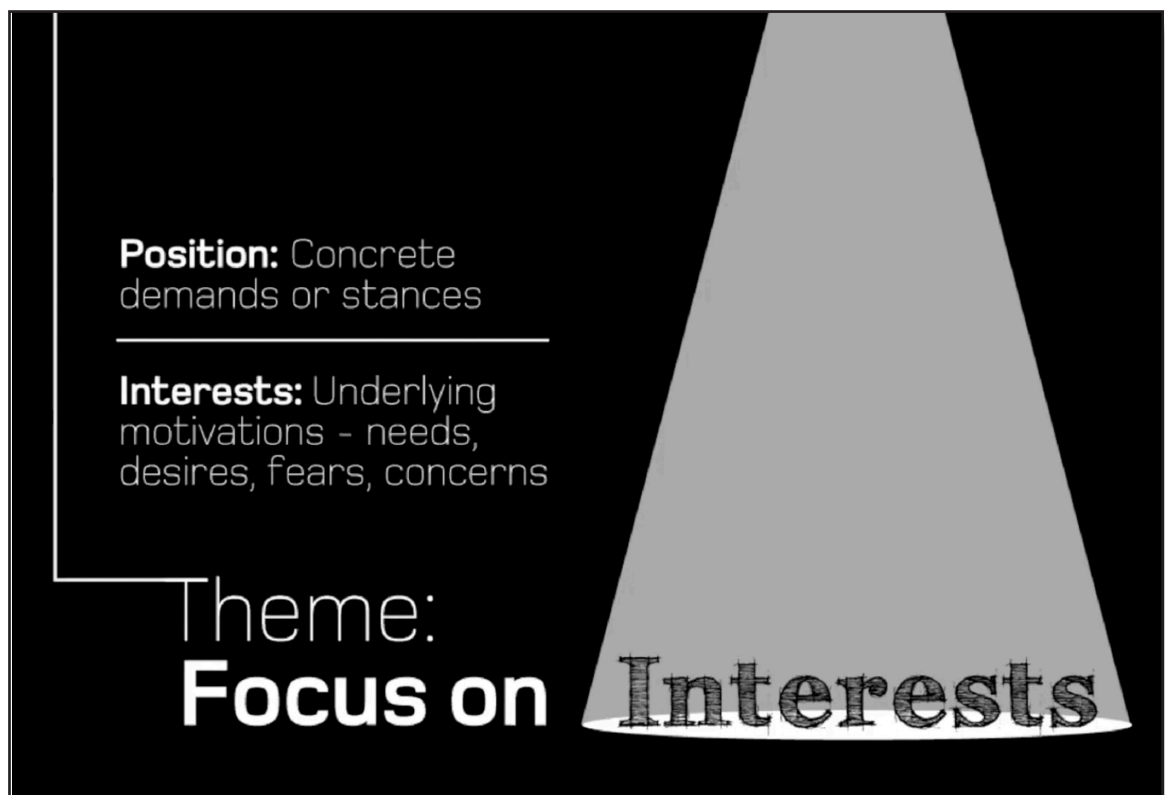
She asked the second student, “Well, why do you want the window closed?” He says, “Because the wind, the draft is blowing my papers around. I can’t work.” Again, the position, the concrete stance, was the closed window, the underlying interest was the draft.

And then she posed this question, which is, “How do we get you fresh air without you a draft?” The two students think about it for a while, and finally one says, “I’ve got an idea.” He disappears into the room next door and he opens a window there, thus providing fresh air for the first student without a draft for the second. Now, in that very simple situation, think about what goes on. You start off with two positions that are in conflict, open window and closed window. The librarian, the mediator in the situation, the third side, asks the magical question, “Why?” Why is it that you want that? What’s behind that? What’s behind the position? What’s really going on there—to get to the level of interest, which in this case are fresh air and no draft. By bringing the focus, the spotlight, back to interest, the students are then able to come up with a creative solution of an open window in the next room.

Now, note that it’s not just a “split the difference” solution, it’s not just a compromise where you go halfway—in that case, that would have been a half open window, which probably would have been not enough fresh air and too much draft. What you find successful negotiators doing is what Mary Parker Follett saw, is that you’re always looking behind the positions of the parties for what’s really going on, what are the underlying interests, so that you can then, maybe, use your creativity together to see if you can come up with the equivalent of an open window in the next room.

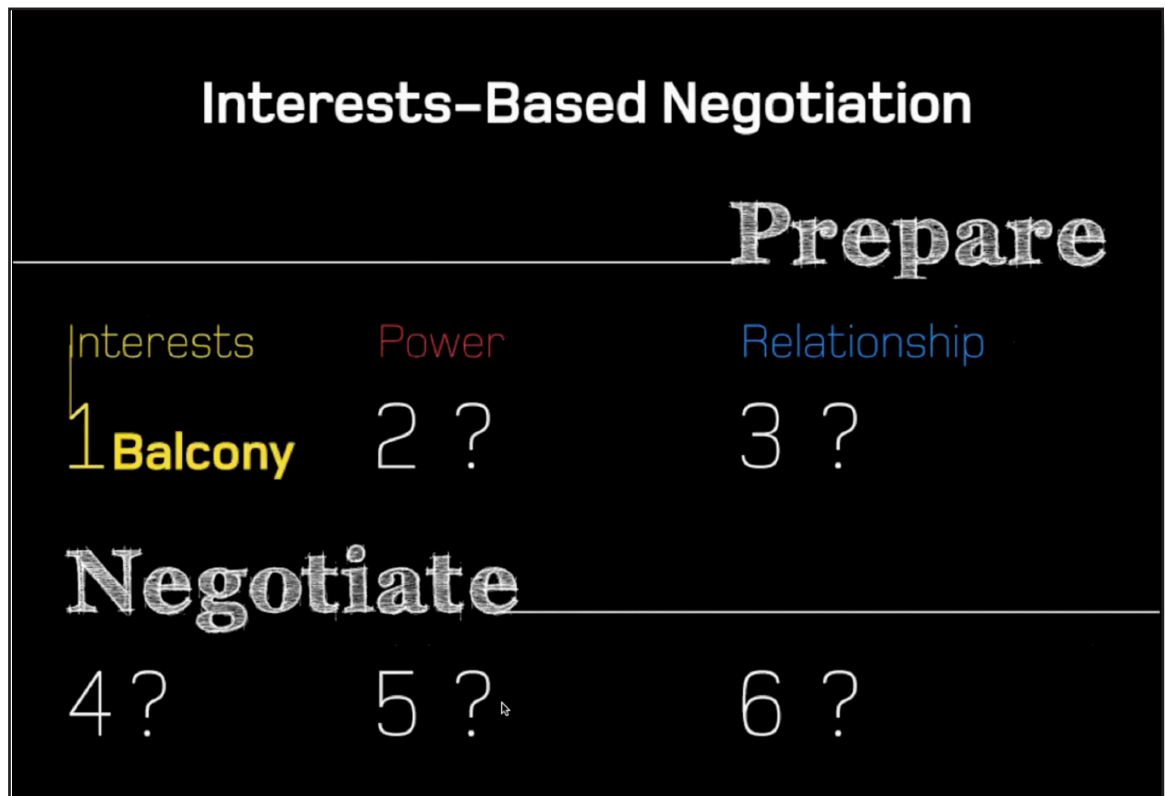
That's, to me, the key, the essence of what I see in moving from confrontation to cooperation, is focusing on the interests, the underlying needs that lie behind what people say they want—because all too often in life we end up like in the proverbial story about two sisters who are quarreling about an orange. The two sisters were quarreling about an orange, so finally they just took out... They couldn't decide, so they just took out a knife and divided the orange in half. The first sister took her half, peels it and eats the fruit. The second sister takes her half, peels it, throws away the fruit, and uses the half of peel for baking a cake. In other words, you end up with a half of peel for one and a half of fruit for the other where, if you had understood behind the position of the orange, that the two, that the sisters had different interest: one was interested in eating, one was interested in cooking. You could have very well ended up with a whole peel for one and a whole fruit for the other—and that's what we're looking for in negotiations, those creative solutions. How do you do that in your situations? How do you look, behind positions, for interests? How do you do that in the very real world we live in? How do you engage in interest-based negotiation?

[00:25:00]



Slide 3

I really encourage you to take your own situation for a moment, and let's just start off here for a moment with, okay, how do you focus on your interest?



Slide 4a

To do that, I think, what's key is the ability to go to the balcony, as we've talked about, it's the ability to imagine yourself you're negotiating on a stage. Part of you goes to a mental and emotional, and spiritual balcony overlooking that stage, a place where you can... What is the balcony? The balcony is a metaphor. It's a place of perspective. It's a place of calm. It's a place that we reach when we meditate. If I go back to the screen for a moment here, how do you ... because, as I see in a lot of your questions here, the biggest obstacle to getting what we want is ourselves. In other words, our human—very understandable, very natural—tendency to react, to act without thinking.

One of the questions was, how do I negotiate when I'm angry? I'm reminded of the old saying of, "When angry, you will make the best speech you'll ever regret." That happens more often than not. We are reaction machines, and a lot of what Thomas and the course has been about is about how do we regulate ourselves so we're not in hyper-reaction and we're not in hypo-reaction of being numb and dissociated, but how do we stay in that zone, that zone of tolerance in between hyper- and hypo-, that optimal zone, so that we can, then, have that clarity to be able to focus on what we really want in that negotiation. Because the truth is that it's going to be very hard to influence others unless we're able to influence ourselves first. That's the key, and that's what the course thus far has been focused on.

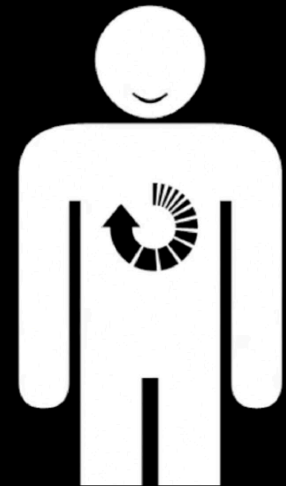
Challenge:

How to Prepare
interests?

Biggest obstacle to getting what we want:
ourselves

Tendency to react = **act without thinking**

Can't influence other without being able to
influence ourselves first



Slide 5

It's that ability to go to the balcony, as we've talked about before, a place of perspective, a place of calm, a place of self-control, a place where we can keep our eyes on the prize. In other words, what are our core interests? As you recall, in the last session I gave an example of my friend Abilio who is a business tycoon and was involved in a large corporate conflict, and I kept on asking, what's your interest? What's your underlying interest behind your position, behind that you want the stock and the non-compete and the company headquarters? In the end, it came down to freedom. He wanted his freedom. What is *your* basic interest? What is *your* basic concern? Is it freedom? Is it some kind of contentment? Is it autonomy? Is it respect? What are your core interests that you want to express and satisfy in this particular negotiation? That's the key. It's the ability to go to the balcony.

In today's world, it's not so easy because every one of us has these phones and these smartphones, and we're receiving texts and emails all the time that are constantly throwing us off. I mean, imagine you're at work and you receive a message, an email message, that you weren't consulted in a particular decision, and so you get angry, and naturally you're angry that you weren't consulted.

Well, the most natural temptation, of course, is to react, is to immediately compose a reply, a kind of angry reply, and you hit, you get the satisfaction of hitting the "Reply" button, but what's worse is you hit the "Reply All" button, and it goes to the entire team, the entire organization, and that's how you see conflicts begin to escalate. There is a button on the screen sometimes which I think of as the "Balcony" button, it's the one that says "Save as Draft". That's the button where you compose it, you get it out of your system, you save it as a draft. And then you go to the balcony. And every one of us has our favorite ways of going to the balcony—it might be to meditate, might be to take a few minutes of silence, it might be to go for a walk, it might be to talk with a friend—and then you come back and then you ask yourself, "What's the prize here? What do I really want to achieve in this interaction? What's the message I really want to send?" And then you're going to hit the "Delete" button on that message, and you'll probably pick up the phone, call the person, and get together with them.

[00:30:00]

That's the key essential skill, I think, we need in a lot of our negotiations today is that ability to go to the balcony—all the more important because of all the distractions that we face.



Slide 6

Preparing for a Negotiation: BATNA

So going to the balcony, understanding what our interests are... So if you think about your own situation, imagine your own interest—last time we talked about where the power comes from, that... where does the power come to satisfy your interest. We introduced the concept of your BATNA.

Interests-Based Negotiation

Prepare

Interests

1 **Balcony**

Power

2 **BATNA**

Relationship

3 ?

Negotiate

4 ?

5 ?


6 ?

Slide 4b


BATNA, if you recall, has to do with the fact that our common tendency in negotiation is to focus on getting an agreement and getting to an agreement, and the mistake that we often make is we negotiate without having considered what are we going to do if, for some reason, we're not able to reach agreement with the other side, in this particular situation?

Challenge | How to prepare **power?**

Common tendency Focus on getting an agreement



Common mistake Negotiate without having considered what to do if you cannot reach agreement



Slide 7

BATNA, as you recall, is—it's your best course of action if you cannot reach agreement. It's almost like there's a fork in the road, either you go towards an agreement or you go towards your best alternative to a negotiated agreement—and that's what BATNA is, an acronym for that.

We talked last time, if you recall, about, again, how everything really starts from within ourselves, our inner BATNA. Our inner BATNA is our own commitment to ourselves to take care of our own needs. That turns out to be the key. That's power. You want to think, in your negotiation, about what your interests are, and then you want to answer that question of, "How am I going to satisfy my interests if I'm not able to reach agreement with the other side?"

The whole purpose of this is... Imagine, for example, take a very simple example, imagine you're looking for a job, and you have one job interview, and it's next week. Imagine how that negotiation goes—but imagine you've taken the intervening week to think about what am I going to do if I don't get that job? What's my alternative? Am I going to go back to school? Am I going to move to another city? What am I going to do? You come up with an alternative. You come up with an alternative, then you negotiate. You're going to have more confidence when you negotiate because you have an alternative. It gives you a psychological freedom to know that you're not entirely dependent on the other side. That's the power of BATNA. Again, in this journey, think about what your BATNA is in your situation, it turns out to be key.



Slide 8

Preparing for a Negotiation: Listening

Which brings us to a third step, which is something we always have focused a lot on, which is the importance of listening. If balcony is a way of preparing your interests and BATNA is a way of preparing your power, the way you prepare for the relational aspect of the negotiation is you listen.



Slide 4c

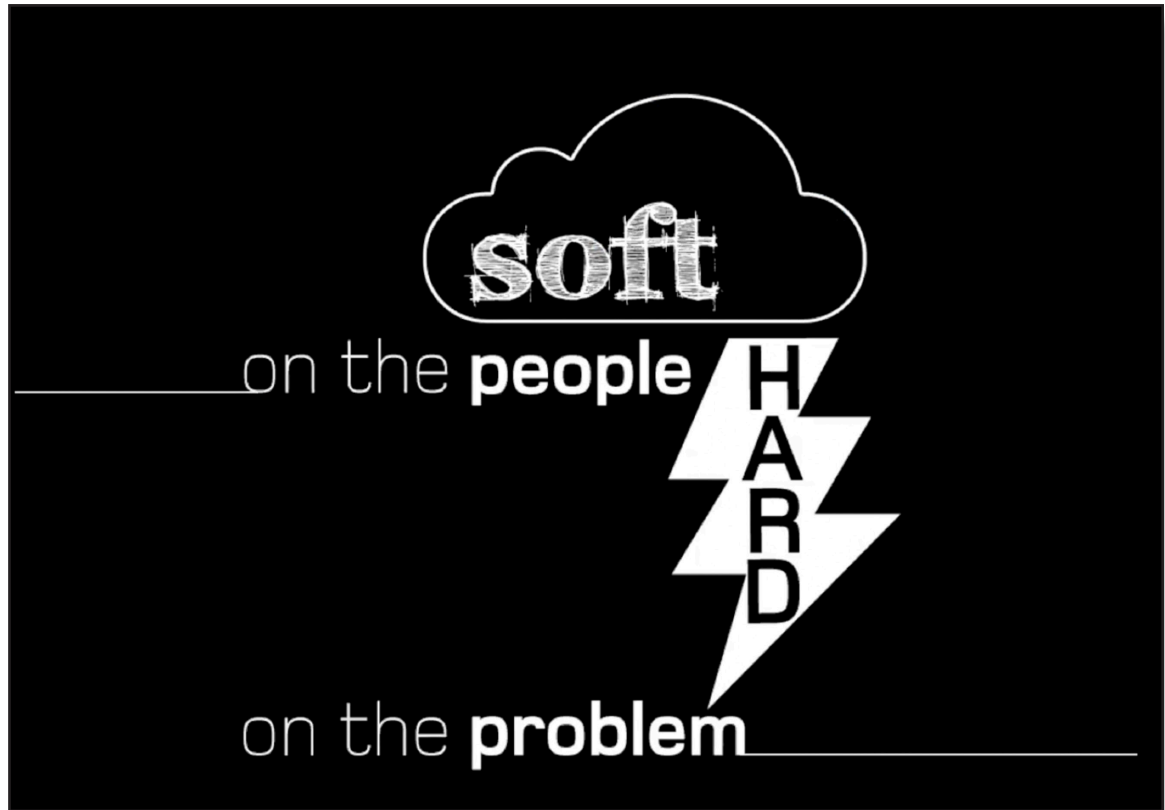
Because there are two classic mistakes that I see often we make in negotiation. In negotiation, we want to—it's an important person to us, it's a family member, it's a client, it's a co-worker—we want to be soft in dealing with the people and therefore we end up being soft in dealing with the problem. In other words, we don't really solve the problem because we just... we give, we accommodate, we just... we deal with that, so we're soft on the people and therefore we're soft on the problem. Or, conversely, we make the opposite mistake which is we want to be hard on the problem and therefore we end up being hard on the person. We need to get that problem solved, and then we sometimes don't see the person and we get into an argument with them.



Slide 9

The whole secret to negotiation is to separate... It's almost like we separate in our heads the people from the problem, so that simultaneously we can be soft on the people, we can be kind with the people, while we remain hard in dealing with the problem.

In fact, the harder you need to be on the problem, the softer you need to be in dealing with the people. If the people, their feelings, their emotions, and so on, are not going to get the way of dealing with the problem...



Slide 10

How do you do that? Well, the key is, as we've talked about, is to listen. If you look at successful negotiators, they listen far more than they talk because, by listening, you're able to put yourself in the other side's shoes. You're able to demonstrate empathy.

[00:35:00]

As we talked about before, the previous sessions, a lot has been about listening to ourselves. And by listening to ourselves, we prepare ourselves now to listen to others. The key challenge is to stay connected with yourself as you connect with the other—that's, I think, one of the real challenges in negotiations—and when you listen, you listen not to refute, not to just come back with a counter argument, but the kind of listening we're talking about is listening to understand. It's listening not just to what is in the words there, but what's behind the words. Listening not just to the *positions*, but to the underlying *interest*. What's really motivating that human being? It's listening not just from within our shoes, which is how we usually listen—which is we're listening, or there's a little voice in us saying, "I agree with that. I disagree with that"—but it's listening not from within *our* frame of reference, but listening from within *their* frame of reference, that's the key challenge. What is it like, to be in their shoes?

And this is not an easy thing to do because oftentimes, maybe, you may not like that person. I think, one of the questions was, "How do you deal with someone who's repugnant?" But even in those situations, I find that what are you trying to do in negotiation? You're trying to influence someone. How can you possibly—trying to change their mind, as it were—how can we possibly change someone's mind if we don't know where their mind is or where their heart is. This is the key challenge in negotiation. That's why I see, even though we think of negotiations being about talking, it's actually more about listening. And I happened to find that if you're negotiating in a team, it's very common to appoint a spokesperson, but I think it's just as important to appoint a listener. I think the listening is just as valuable, if not more valuable, than the talking. Listening is also a way of showing respect. What does respect mean? Respect means to see the other, to hear the other, to meet the other—and the key way, I think, we can do that is listening.

Listen **more** than you talk

Listen to **understand**, not to refute

Listen from within **their** frame of **reference**

Appoint a **listener**

Paraphrase



Listen: Put yourself in **their shoes**

Slide 11

If you think about it, many of you will have seen... I think, we used that, maybe, before, so we'll just move on from that, but the...

That's preparing. Just to pause for a moment here and ask you to think about—balcony, BATNA, listening.

Actually, I think what I'm going to do for a moment here is take a look at some of these questions. Someone has just asked a question of how do both sides, how can each side do more listening? To me, the key is... One of the challenges I find that people ask is, "Okay, I may be willing to listen, but it's the other side that doesn't listen." How do you deal with someone who doesn't listen to you? First of all, I would say that, maybe, the best way to encourage someone else to listen to you is to listen to them, that if you can model it first, then you can set a different tone.

I remember being involved once in a labor management negotiation, where both sides had ended up in a major strike, and now they were sitting down again, three years later, to negotiate again. And it looked like it would end up in a strike again. The management laid out their position. Then the union's turn was to lay out their position, but the union leader in this case actually decided to do something different. He decided to listen. He said to management, "Tell me more. Let me understand more. What are the financial constraints on your situations?"

He drew them out. He asked them a lot of questions and, by listening, he changed the modality of that negotiation such that management started to say to themselves, "The union is really listening. They are really trying to understand our situation. Maybe, we should listen to them." Both sides started listening and, in this particular situation, they were able to arrive at an agreement, able to avert a strike. And it all began with one side, in this case the union, taking the initiative in listening.

[00:40:00]



Slide 4d

Reframing: Moving the Spotlight on to Constructive Options

That brings us to, again, going back to your situation of, okay, but how do you change—a lot of these questions have to be—how do you change the game? What if you're focused on interest but the other side, they are just focused on their position? How do you change the game? What if the other side, for example, as I see in some of these questions, takes an unreasonable position? If they take an unreasonable position, our natural tendency, common tendency is to assert our own position and reject their position, which of course just leads back into traditional conflict.

Challenge: How to negotiate **interests?**

What happens
when you **reject their**
position

To assert **your position**
and **reject theirs**

COMMON TENDENCY

Slide 12

What's the alternative? Is there an alternative? The alternative, I find, is to *reframe*—which is one of the greatest powers in a negotiation. It means to redirect the spotlight, it's almost like there's a spotlight in the negotiation.



Slide 13a

The spotlight can either be on interest or it can be on... It can be on positions or it can be on interest. How do you change that spotlight? I'm reminded of a, if I may just share a personal story here of being involved, many years ago, as a third party, as a mediator, in Holland, between representatives of Russia and representatives of Chechnya where, at that point, were engaged in a war. We had the vice president of Chechnya and the national security advisor of Russia in a room.

The negotiations got off to a bad start. We were meeting, in the Hague, in the room where the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal was taking place, and so the Chechen vice president began by denouncing the Russians and saying, “You’re responsible for war crimes and you ought to be prosecuted right here.” It was a very harsh attack that he began the dialogue with. Then he turned to me at one point and he said, “Oh, you’re an American, and let me tell you about the Americans and what you are doing,” and he said, “Look at what you’re doing in Puerto Rico.” And he went on and on and on about Puerto Rico in a very aggressive, attacking fashion, as I see in some of these questions like that, and I was listening, through translation, and trying to—and everyone was focused, looking at me, how I was going to respond to this—and I was able, for a moment, to go to the balcony, the translation afforded me that chance to go to the balcony, to pause for a moment. When it was my turn, what came to me to say to him was, “I hear you. I hear the suffering of the Chechen people,” because he talked about the whole history of Chechnya, “I hear the suffering.” I was trying to listen, behind the assertiveness, to what was really going on for him. I could see there’s a lot of trauma, hundreds of years of trauma, in the Chechen people. I hear the suffering, and I wanted to acknowledge that, and I said, “And I also hear the criticism, including the criticism of my country, and I take it as a sign that we’re among friends and we can speak frankly with each other—that’s how I welcome your criticism—and what we’re here to do...”

In other words, I was basically taking the spotlight. He was putting the spotlight on Puerto Rico, and I was thinking to myself for a moment, “What do I know about Puerto Rico?” But then I realized: that’s not really what this was about. So I said, “What can we do to deal with the suffering of the Chechen people? That’s what we’re here to do. We’re here to deal with the suffering of the Chechen people, to have a dialogue, so we can bring this war to an end.” In other words, there’s a spotlight in the negotiation. The spotlight either can be on positions and aggressive attacks or the spotlight can be on how do we solve this problem together? So I was using that to reframe—and that, to me, is one of the greatest powers that we have as negotiators, the power to reframe the situation, to reframe it.

How do you reframe? Often, you reframe by moving the spotlight away from positions on to the interests, on to what are some constructive options for dealing the situation, on to what are fair ways of resolving the situation.

[00:45:00]

We reframe, mostly, a lot by asking good questions. What are problem solving questions that we can use to move the focus from positions on to interest options and criteria? That's what I was trying to do in that situation, is the power of reframing. That, to me, is one of the greatest powers that we have, is the power to move that spotlight—and the way we do it, often, is not by making statements. It's by asking questions. Negotiation turns out to be, maybe, less about talking than it is about listening and more about asking questions than it is about making statements.



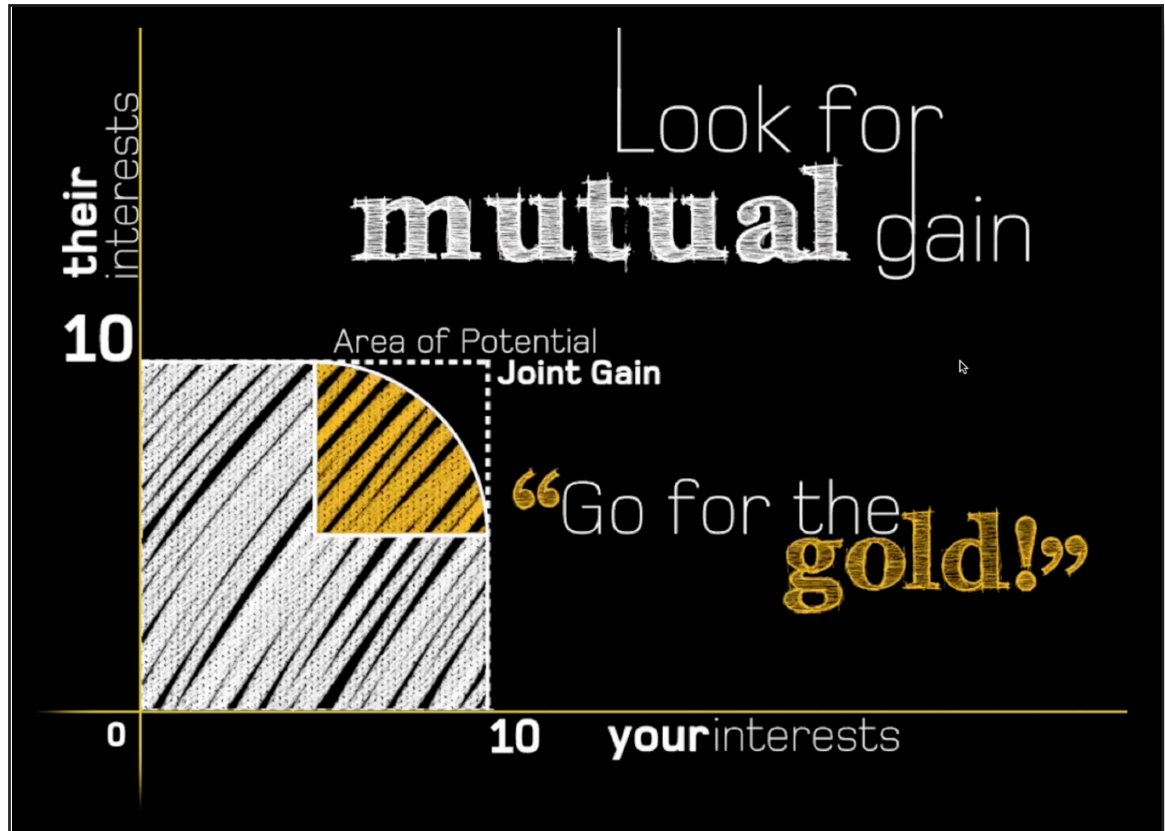
Slide 13b

Let me just think, if you imagine for a moment here, when you reframe, the whole idea here is to be hard on the problem. What is hard on the problem mean? You're soft on the people, you're hard on the problem. Hard on the problem doesn't mean being hard in pursuing your positions. It means hard in making sure that the interest of both sides gets satisfied. It's hard in being rigorous in trying to invent the best options. It's hard in insisting that fairness be respected in the negotiation. That's what hard in these situations means.



Slide 14

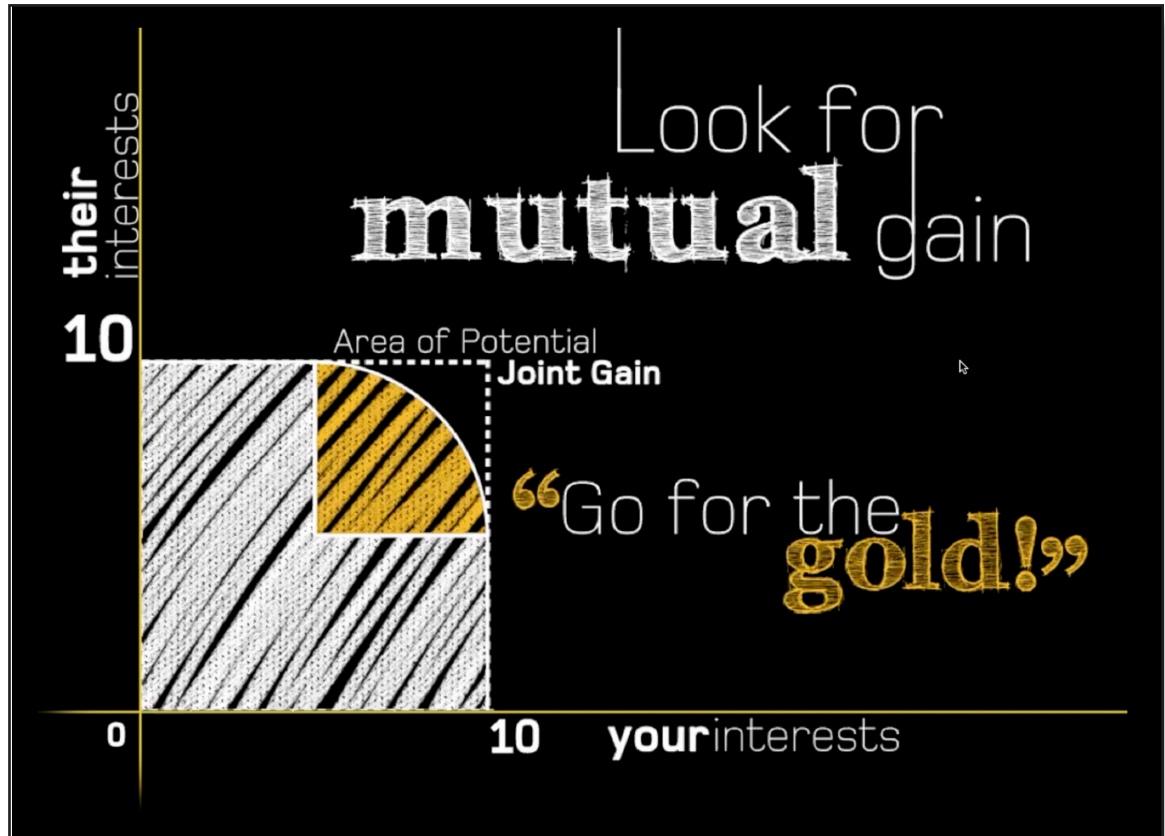
The whole idea here is you're looking for mutual gain. You're looking for solutions which satisfy the interests of all sides in that situation.



Slide 15a

It's almost as if, if you think about this in a... if you put this on a graph, for a moment, in terms of how satisfied are your interests in the negotiation, when you look at outcomes, potential outcomes, on a scale of zero to 10, how satisfied are the other side's interests? You can see that there's a whole range of possible solutions. There's a whole range of possible solutions.

Oftentimes, we end up with a five and a five, which seems okay for me, it's okay for you—and that's okay, but what that graph suggests is that there's an area of potential joint gain where we can actually optimize our solutions. We can look for that open window in the next room. We can look for solutions that are genuine win-win solutions—that's what we're looking for is, going for that gold. That's what comes from creative solutions. That's what we're looking for in those negotiations.



Slide 15b

Q&A: Building Up the Power to Get Past the Other's No

Participant 1: I've been involved in a long conflict, actually, over 30 years, and that I'm still in, in a male-oriented company, and I came at a time when there weren't many women. I'm realizing that a lot of the conflict over the years, and particularly one that we have now, that one of the big issues is the different communication style of men and women. And in order to solve our problem, we have to bring both sides together. That's been my challenge in trying to figure out how do you do that, and what part do I play in it, and how can I help them and... Yeah. It's a big one.

And it's really interesting because right now, in the whole "Me too" kind of thing, that's really the chaos, the pus that's erupted out of a boil in business, that we all thought we were alike and we're not, and now we don't quite know what to do when it's just oozing all over the place.

The particular thing that I have, without going into details, is a very big issue that involves money and taking care of suffering people.

William: Yeah.

Participant 1: Yeah. Better at managing the money so they can take care of the suffering people, but then they have trouble addressing some of the issues that the suffering people are going through, which the women are more equipped to deal with. Together, we can really solve the problem, but in the meantime, nobody wants to talk to me, they just write me letters. And I physically went to New York City and sat down at lunch with the chief operating officer of our company in August, and it took five months to get... Nobody would call me. Five months later, they finally sent me a letter with nothing new in it. It's definitely disengaging. Every single issue you've said is involved here. Yeah.

William: Yeah. That's not an easy one. A lot of aspects to that question.

One thing I will say is, I mean, one of the challenges, one of the opportunities today, actually, is women often are better at qualities that are absolutely critical to negotiations nowadays—like empathy, like compassion, like paying attention to relationships. Men may be more focused on the transaction. Men may be focused more on being hard on the problem, women being soft on the people. To me, the optimal, what we need in the negotiations today is both. We need to be soft on the people, we need to deal with the suffering while we remain hard on the problem. The question is, how do we blend those in the world of today because the qualities, the feminine and the masculine qualities are both needed today, very much so. Historically, the masculine qualities have been more predominant and dominating, and the whole question is, how do we balance that and integrate it?

In your own particular situation, one of the things, I think, again, as you think through your own situation, is the ability to go to the balcony for a moment, really focus on what your objectives are. What is it that you really want? What's the prize? Which is, I read between the lines, is a company that can address that suffering.

I think it would be very important—given the fact that your voice has not been heard, that the kind of treatment that you received—that you really think through the BATNA question, which is: what are you prepared to do to advance your interests, how you see the company needs to run if the other side is not listening, if they're not agreeing with you? What's your BATNA?

One thing to think about in terms of BATNA is BATNA is not about punishing the other side. It's about empowering yourself. In your own particular situation, I wonder, for example, sometimes one of the ways to construct, to strengthen our own power, our own empowerment to deal with the situation is to forge a coalition, so to ask yourself, "Who can I build a natural coalition with?" Who shares this common interest, for example, in addressing suffering—and build a coalition because it may be easier for the man in that company to dismiss you, but it's not going to be easy for them to dismiss a lot of you. The more you can amplify your voice, the more important that will be.

Again, I think, the key, all of these elements of being able to truly listen to the other side, being able to reframe, to be able to keep, to move the spotlight back to, "Okay, how do we make money and address suffering?" It's both/and rather than either/or, the ability to continually do that is going to be key.

At some point in negotiations as we'll talk about, too, in a moment, or perhaps later on, is sometimes you have to say no. Negotiation isn't just about getting to yes. It's about saying no, and we'll talk about the art of saying no in order to get to the yes that you really want.

Participant 1: Except no. That's where they are is, they have said, "We've told you no over and over and over," on one particular thing, and we just haven't given up until it makes sense to us—and this particular thing makes no sense, still. It's not something that we can give up on till it make sense, but that's their position. It's like your parents, when they said, "I told you no." And then you go to mom, and she tells you yes. It's the family dynamics in this company.

William: Sure. Sure.

Participant 1: Huge company, but we still ... they have a heart, so you get in the same family dynamics in many ways that you would get with that. We're learning how to solve our problems without going to mom and dad.

William: That's one of the real challenges in the world today is how do we do that, how do we solve our problems amongst ourselves, at a horizontal level, rather than always appealing to mom or dad, and that's one of the challenges in the world today.

I'm happy, also, to, if you like to write me offline, too, I'd be happy to talk with you about that particular situation, so we can get into more details, but I can see one of the challenges is, really, is getting past that no. And to get past that no, I think, you really are going to need a little more power so that they actually can listen, your voice can actually be heard, and that's, to me, why it's so important to focus on BATNA. Thank you for the question.

Q&A: Recognizing and Neutralizing a Manipulative Tactic

Host: Over a hundred people responded to your invitation to write and, I think, many of the questions, in a way, you spoke to; the way you framed the journey I do feel answered many of the questions, but here's one... Let's take this one. Someone asked, "What if you feel the other side isn't being truthful, that there is an underlying strategy that is manipulative to the situation?" How would you approach that?

William: Yeah, and that happens, when we feel the other side is not being truthful or actually telling lies. To me this, again, underscores—in particular in the challenging and difficult situations like that one and like many I can see on the question sheet—is the importance of going back to the balcony because the way that manipulation works often is when we don't... we're not fully cognizant that we're being manipulated.

The ability to go to the balcony and observe it like you're observing a movie or observing a play is going to be key. And then you listen to yourself—and again, this goes back to... how do we know when someone's not telling us the truth? It's often not just through our brains, we're often hearing that if we can learn to listen to our bodies, it's often in our gut, we have this gut feeling that something is off. There's some incongruence between what the person is saying and what we know, between what the person is saying and their tone, for example.

It's interesting, I have a colleague who studies lies and how you detect lies. One of the things he's found that's interesting is that it's often easier for people to hear a lie, to grasp that it's a lie, when it's not being truth, if they're just on the phone, they are listening—because when you listen, your ear can detect a change in tonality, a difference in tonality.

One thing to do in a situation like that, to detect whether or not you're being lied to, is to be a little like scientist—you don't know whether you're being lied to, but you suspect there may be—is to ask questions to which you already know the answers, and then watch how they shade the answers, because people who lie or are untruthful rarely just do it on one situation. They do it repeatedly, so you can actually test it out and see how they're shading it, the situation, and once you realize that in fact they're not telling you the truth, once you realized that they are manipulating, then you can take measures to protect yourself. That's the key. The ability to neutralize the tactic is to recognize it, and to recognize it, we have to go to the balcony. You have to name the game and then test it out and see what happens.

When you're being manipulated, for example, then you may want to go back to, again, it goes back to really knowing what your BATNA is—because in some situations, your best alternative of doing something different to advance your interest other than negotiating with them maybe the one that's indicated.

Q&A: Shifting the Focus from Blame to Solutions

Host: One more written question. This is a really big one, I think, and you might want to, in some way, relate it to the recent Trump Israel-Palestinian topic. Saskia says, "We mediators, meditators, global witnesses seem to focus on the interest of victims or the less powerful—like North Korea or, we might say, the Palestinians—and I wonder if it is not more important to focus on the underlying needs/healing of perpetrators? Of course, that already brings in the whole distinction of perpetrators and victims, but anyway..."

William: I hear that and I think there's a lot of truth in that. Well, we'll take North Korea and the United States, since that came up as an example, or you could take the one in the Middle East, the Israelis and Palestinians, but there is often, and I see this as a theme through a number of questions, there is often a more powerful party and a less powerful party. And if we are to arrive at a solution, we need to be able, as third-siders, to go to the balcony and listen deeply to both sides: listen to the more powerful, listen to the so-called perpetrators as well as listen to the victims—and it's absolutely true.

Right now, this project that my colleagues and I are trying to work on, between United States and North Korea, we're spending at least as much time trying to understand the psychology of the American leader as we are of the North Korean leader, and really trying to understand the psychology—including the trauma psychology.

I find it's important to focus on both—and, from a balcony perspective, again, from an empathetic perspective—in order to truly empathize, we may need to temporarily suspend the part of us that judges, because we all have our own personal opinions and so on, but I find that in fact, if we're truly going to empathize, then it means putting ourselves truly in that person's shoes and suspending the natural tendency to judge or to have our own opinion, to really understand that person from the inside, and that will give us our best chance of being able to influence that person constructively—if we're not blaming them. I find that the blame game, it doesn't get us very far in negotiation. The question is, shifting the question from, "Who's to blame?" to "How can we truly understand each party to the situation?" and then, "How can we come up with a solution that meets the essential needs of all sides?" That, to me, is the more useful question.

Host: Right, right. I mean, in a way, I hear you saying, how can we keep our heart open without getting into some fuzzy "Everything is okay."

William: That's it.

Host: How can we stay in an open relating to the situation?

William: Yeah, I think it's important to stay connected with our own values. It's not about... It's about our own values, our own sense of justice. And at the same time I don't... I think, at the same time, we can empathize, we can—it's both/and, it's not either/or. And sometimes we put peace and justice into real contradiction with each other when, in fact, what we're looking for is solutions that embody peace *and* justice, peace and justice and truth and reconciliation. It's about blending all of those. It's very important.

Q&A: Empathizing with Victims on Both Ends of the Barrel

Participant 2: Yeah, I see, I would... I live in a moment in Australia and work quite a bit with aboriginal indigenous communities. I come more and more to the conclusion of how important it is to work with, say, the colonizer and to heal that part of ourselves, of, say, the—there's a lot of flies around here—to heal the part which is so easily blamed and to talk between ourselves and not answer a bit to that automatic tendency to rescue or help the person who is seen as the victim. But our tendency is to go help the person who is in the less powerful position.

For me, myself, I'd like to shift it. I'd like to shift that to really look internally—like what does it do if you are called the perpetrator, like where does that pain go, where does that live? How does it express itself very often in high level of defensiveness? And how can we heal that?

[01:05:00]

William:

Very, very, very important, yeah. I think that's it. How do we... In fact, you could probably only shift the situation truly if you can take... if you can deal with, empathetically, with the perpetrator as well as with the victim, with the colonizer as well as the colonized. Even great leaders like... take Nelson Mandela, he recognized, when he said, "I'm fighting for freedom," he made it very clear throughout his whole life that I'm fighting for the freedom—not just of the blacks, but of the whites because the colonizers are also oppressed, in the sense, by the situation.

That, to me, is key. It's the ability to realize that... I remember a phrase that a friend, a fellow that I once met who went through a terrible tragedy, his son was murdered by a young boy who was part of a gang, and his son was delivering pizza, and when he delivered pizza, as part of the gang initiation, this boy who was only 14 killed his son, and he was faced with that incredible pain of losing his son. He felt like he resorted to prayer, and the answer he got from the prayer, the insight that he got from the prayer is that actually there were victims at both sides of the barrel. There were victims on both sides of the barrel—which caused him to reach out to the perpetrator, to the boy who had killed his son and to the boy's grandfather, and to form a foundation together to educate schools, to try and reduce school violence to make sure this didn't happen again.

He reached out and reconciled himself. There was justice in that situation, the boy ended up going to prison and so on, but he came out, when he came out of prison, he ended up working for that foundation—but that insight of seeing that there are victims on both ends of the barrel, to me, is particularly pertinent to what you're saying.

Thank you for all the questions. I can see there are just so many... This is such a rich subject, and this is why Thomas and I felt like taking this field of blending the inner perspective with the outer perspective can help us in dealing with so many of these very difficult situations, why we're creating a community of learning where we're asking this question of how can humanity heal itself, and these questions are very much pertinent to that.

Begin Meditation

Let me for a moment, though, channel Thomas and lead us through a little bit of a meditation. Take a meditation moment. They have been so valuable, I found them so valuable during our times together.

If you'll, for a moment, if you can take a posture that's comfortable and upright and close your eyes, and we'll do a little bit of a meditation that can focus on these issues.

For a moment, if you can feel your body, perhaps, maybe starting with your toes, your feet. Just feel relaxed. Relax your feet, your legs, slowly go up your body, your pelvic area. Feel your tummy and your chest, your breath, your arms. Just feel your body, your neck. Relax your shoulders. Feel your head. Relax your face.

Just really see if we can just explore that inner spaciousness and look for any sensations, feeling the floor of the Earth under our feet. Feeling supported and noticing. Going to the balcony.

[01:10:00]

Noticing any feelings that you have right now, any feelings to do with a particular conflict situation that you've been dealing with. What are the feelings? Where are they in your body? Any feelings of frustration or anger or fear or shame or guilt? Just feeling those things, where those emotions reside in your body, noticing them.

Noticing any thoughts you might have, any thoughts you might have about this particular situation or about the class and remembering that those thoughts and those feelings, those sensations are like clouds passing through the sky.

Taking a moment of silence, for a moment, we can have a moment of silence, feeling all of us around the world, together, in a moment of silence.

Breathing, noticing our intake, inspiring, breathing out, noticing our breath.

Noticing your breath and feeling your lungs fill. Breathing out, feeling that inner spaciousness.

And now that we're on the balcony for a moment, a place of perspective, a place of calm, now, let's take a look at what's going on on the stage and come back to, perhaps, the situation that you've been, the conflict, the negotiations, the situation, the issue that you've been dealing with.

From this perspective, for a moment, take a look, as if you were watching a play, at the parties. One of them is you there on the stage, and there are other people. See who's on the stage with you and look into your heart for a moment, see what's the key need there? What's the key interest? What's the key desire or the key concern that's animating you in that situation? Put yourself in your own shoes for a moment. What's your prize?

[01:15:00]

Then, when you're ready, see if you can put yourself in the shoes of the other person or the other people, but take one person, for a moment, perhaps the person who's been giving you some difficulty, who's been hard to deal with. See if we can, from that balcony perspective, put ourselves in that person's shoes. What does it feel like to be in their position? What's really... is there some trauma there as well? Are there some fears? Are there some desires? Are there some aspirations?

How would you articulate that if you were in their shoes, if you were them? Really putting yourself in their shoes for a moment, what does it feel like to be in their shoes? What's animating them? What emotions are they feeling?

Now, imagine, what do you see from the balcony? Do you have any kind of insights about the situation? Do you see what it's about and what's really wanting to happen here? Do you see any ways through, from a perspective of being on the balcony? Can you imagine a journey that you might engage in with that other person, or if it's two people, or if it's three people, or if it's more, in which there could be looking for a solution that works for all sides, that addresses the basic needs of all sides. Is there a win-win-win there, something that really, are you seeing any possibilities there that could emerge? Any clues? Or anything that you could do that could help—like listening?

Is there a question you could ask? Is there some way you could reframe the situation? Is there any way to engender a transformation? Are there third sides? Are there others who could help in that situation? Where are the opportunities or the seeds of possibility?

Again, from a balcony perspective, empathetically putting yourself in the shoes of both parties or all parties in that situation, understanding everyone has their own traumas, their own... Where are the possibilities? What's wanting to emerge here? Is there some positive possibility?

If I may just introduce a situation that's facing all of us in the world today, which is this conflict between United States and North Korea, which is on the knife edge, which could go one way, a destructive direction, or could go a constructive direction. From a balcony point of view, what are you noticing about this conflict that has all of humanity as its hostage, in some ways? How do we free that hostage? How do we free ourselves?

How can we, as third siders, encourage a constructive transformation of that relationship? Understanding each side, understanding each side's concerns for their own safety. Each side's needs for respect. Is there a way through that's good for both sides and good for the world as a whole? Really holding open that possibility. Is there a way forward?

Understanding that, in a very few weeks, there will be an Olympics held there on the Korean peninsula where all the world will send its athletes, women and men to engage in peaceful competition. Is that a way to move forward?

[01:20:00]

Is there a way to move forward in a good way? What's wanting to happen here? How can we as a circle of concerned global witnesses of third siders, how can we witness and presence that possibility of a positive, constructive pathway here?

Let's reflect and hold open this possibility that humanity is one single body, one single body, and all of these conflicts that we have are just symptomatic of the whole, and what we're trying to do here is to activate our collective immune system to help humanity heal itself.

Okay. Thank you. Whenever you're ready, you can open your eyes.

End of Meditation

Q&A: Hosting Ourselves in Order to Host the Other

Participant 3: I loved that meditation because I actually did it with myself, and what I discovered was the same thing I discovered when you brought it out to North Korea and the United States, which is I was able to really see that I don't do a good job of listening to those parts in me that are either traumatized or create anxiety, and it was pretty powerful because it helped me, when I went to see the big picture, to see just the fact that nobody's really listening, and that's all I really want to say.

William: That's profoundly true. Starting with myself, I've noticed that, too, that we... There's a profound scarcity of listening. Everyone's talking, but who's listening? And certainly, in the case of United States and North Korea, that's what I find is that, listening to each side at rather high levels of decision making, very high levels of decision making, everyone is broadcasting, but no one is really receiving messages, and there's a profound gulf of misunderstanding as a result. To me, it's not just them, it's us. We're not listening.

Now, one of the things I find very interesting, because I've been working on this, is I bring up the situation of North Korea with people, even people in the peace field, but it's interesting to me how often I bring it up and say, "There's this very real problem, the danger is perceived to be very great, we're on this knife edge here," and people change the subject because it's hard to get our heads and our hearts wrapped around. It's hard to really listen. And this is, to me, the great opportunity for those of us in this circle to hone our ability to listen, beginning, as you said, with listening to ourselves. Because the truth is, I think, what I've discovered is, as important as listening is, we may understand that, "Oh yes, it is important to listen," but why aren't we listening?"

[01:25:00]

I think the answer, as you just put it, is: if we can't even listen to ourselves first, if we can't take a moment to listen to our own bodily sensations and perceptions and thoughts and feelings—and that's why meditation, to me, is such an essential foundation to mediation—if we can't listen to ourselves then we can't create space, and if we can't create space, how can we host the other? How can we, if we can't create space inside of ourselves... We have to host ourselves in order, then, to be able to host the other, in order to be able, then, to host conflict as enormous as this current peril between the United States and North Korea, to host humanity.

I think that's the real question we're asking is, how do we host? How do we learn to be hosts? And good hosts start by being good listeners.

Q&A: Witnessing Trauma Without Dissociating

Host: I want to ask you a question that I guess a lot of people will relate to, and it would be great to hear your experience. This comes from John-David Longwell. It's a long question, so I'm going to summarize the essence, which is basically when you are hearing, for instance, some very traumatic information in a conflict situation, or your... for instance, in the Pocket [Project], we have a senior psychologist from Gaza, his team are very traumatized by what they're having to hear every day.

Really, the question is for you, in some of the situations you are in, what kind of methods, practices do you have that—I hesitate to use the word 'protect', although John-David used it—but to help you assimilate, let's say, some of the horrors that you might sometimes hear about.

William: Yeah. Oh, it's a really good question. Brings to mind a time a few years ago when my colleagues and I were working on the terrible tragedy that was unfolding and has been unfolding in Syria. We went right close to the Syrian border, and Syrian leaders—mayors or leaders of groups and so on—would come out, and we were carrying out a kind of an interviewing process to understand all sides and all the surrounding sides just to get behind the positions, again, to what the interests were, that's what the purpose of the project was, to listen, behind the position, for what did each side really want here, because they're weren't talking with each other. We thought, maybe, if we could listen, then we could pass that information, let each side know what the other side seemed to really want.

In this particular session, which was a week, people would come out, but it was literally like... They were just stepping across the border to Turkey, we were right on the border, within a couple of miles of the border, and I think my colleagues, [they] were academic colleagues, thought of this as, "Okay, we're just trying to get at their interest." But the people who were coming out were so traumatized, it was like they were stepping out of hell just for a few hours and then going back into hell. Bombs had fallen. Close family members have been killed. It seemed that, I noticed myself, this was no longer an intellectual exercise. There was so much trauma in the room. The stories were so poignant that it wasn't something where you could just create intellectual distance.

I can feel that question, I felt that in other situations where you can feel all the suffering. For me, the most important thing is a little bit of self-care, and this is where, again, a meditation practice serves me well, to just meditate in the morning, make sure that there's time, there's breaks, to be able to receive this information and to be able to really host that information without dissociating.

In fact, this goes back to, I think, one of the original impulses that Thomas and I had for creating this course, which was we imagined a community of people who could, who were trained both in inner ways and outer ways, who could deal with deeply traumatic collective traumas like we see in the world today, and presence them, witness them without dissociating, without numbing ourselves, so as to be totally witnessed...

[01:30:00]

We can witness them so that, then, the right third side actions would emerge naturally out of that witnessing, out of that presencing—because that's, to me, the first role of the third side is to be a witness, but to be a witness not just with our minds, but with our hearts, with our bodies. That, to me, is one of the, really, our hopes for this course, is to evolve best practices for how we do that, how can we learn to truly witness trauma in a way that, then, we can be effective in being third sides in the world and healing and helping to heal the process?

Q&A: The Emergence of Our Inner Third Side

Participant 4: Thank you. A question that arises for me William is—just looking at my little notes—I wonder if you've found a way to support each of the parties in a conflict in coming to a place of a third party witnessing position within each of the apparent conflicting people and conflicting positions. And one voice that has come to me repeatedly during your talk today is of the manner in which Thomas has pointed to how that which might be considered a traumatized or—can't think of the word, not 'well-positioned', I'm in lack of the right word—I remember how, throughout past years, he's always pointed to how that which was considered as a breakdown was always, at the point where that pattern was developed, the most brilliant thing that the system could come up with as a way to survive at the time. It seems, if we can, I wonder if you've come up with ways where you can support each of the parties in seeing empathetically—I don't know if that's a word—one another's position, is that called supporting them in that third position.

William: Yeah, that is, in fact, the work. That's the aim of it because the third side is not just third parties. Often, I play the role of a third party, the third side exists in every human being. The third side is simply that perspective that we achieve, it's that balcony perspective, it's that ability to hold the whole. Absolutely, the work that I do in any variety of contexts is working with the parties to awaken or strengthen the third side element of themselves, and you can see that in great leaders—I mentioned Mandela, for example. Mandela wasn't just a leader for his own side. He was a third side leader. His language, everything was around the whole which included his adversaries, it included the others, included all the different parties, he stood for the whole. And I think that's, in the work that I've done, when there's breakthroughs, and sometimes it's slow, there are setbacks.

This is, maybe, the hardest work that we humans can do because a lot of this work, particularly to get to the point where those points, it involves, for example, hearing things you don't want to hear, acknowledging things you don't want to acknowledge, apologizing for things you don't want to apologize for. Because oftentimes there's so much trauma, but I've seen it happen time and time again—whether it's in South Africa, whether it's in Northern Ireland among Catholics and protestants, whether it's in the Middle East, whether it's between Americans and Russians—in so many different circumstances, I've seen this innate human capacity over time to hear the anguish of the other, to hear the suffering of the other. It takes time. There's a lot of numbing but that's, to me, is the real emergence of the third side, is the third side in which the parties themselves are third sides.

[01:35:00]

Participant 4: I've seen how powerful this has been just within my listening to my different parts, through Thomas's perspective, having come to a place of having compassion for that place within me which, as a child, might have responded in a way that, from an adult perspective, might seem now dysfunctional, but how he pointed to how there's brilliance in the response. Coming to having compassion for that so-called, might be perceived as, dysfunctional, but at the time, it was the absolute reality of that infant, for instance. It seemed like existential concern.

William: Absolutely. Something that's really struck me, too, about the way Thomas's approach is, to see that what we've characterized as defense mechanisms and, in some ways, we've given them... almost pathologized or given them negative connotations, were actually very intelligent responses by our children doing the best they could in those circumstances, that now, maybe, we're in a more resourced place to adapt an even more intelligent or an intelligent response that responds to the moment, but recognizing instead of stigmatizing those parts of ourselves, really appreciating them and expressing gratitude for those early protective responses—I remember he mentioned last time about the submarine where you, if the submarine is sinking, you have to bat down the hatches so numbing even is a very intelligent response. I think that's how we can rescue it and include it, so that we can, then, transcend it.

Participant 4: Touching for me to find compassion for that part of myself through this perspective of the intelligence of it rather than the labeling and judgment and trying to compensate for some perceived incapacity of myself when I was really still, where I'm still acting from a place of a two year old who's now in a 69 year old body.

Q&A: Paying Attention to Internal Dynamics First

Participant 5: I want to say something about my recent work in the Middle East which involved Gaza, as Nicholas already talked about one of our colleagues. He's a psychologist, Gaza psychologist, and he invited me to work with him on trauma, so I entered Gaza the last month. Earlier you said how to host conflicts, but hosting conflicts in Gaza is extremely difficult because there's not one group that is in conflict. It's not the Palestinians against the Israeli. It's also the Palestinians against each other, like Fatah and Hamas who are in conflict with each other all the time, for a long time. I want to ask my question because everybody is traumatized in Gaza. Not only the psychiatrist and psychologist, but everybody. For a trauma worker as I was there, it's difficult to host conflicts that are going on and are based on, let's say, family systems or even tribal systems.

I was previously trained as an anthropologist myself. We're dealing with a lot of levels of conflict and causes of positions, as you previously said. Well, I realized I don't have a real question, but maybe I address this to you as an anthropologist: how to deal with tribal groups and conflicts from our point of view, can you elaborate a little bit on that?

[01:40:00]

William: Yeah, the truth is, we're all, we may not see ourselves this way, but we're all in tribal groups. Now we're having to live with the possibility that there's a human tribe, and it's very true what you're saying, that people see this as like a Palestinian-Israeli conflict but the conflict is as much among the Palestinians and among the Israelis as it is between the two.

I find that, actually, generally to be true, that oftentimes the real problems in a negotiation are not where you think they are. It's like there's three tables in a negotiation. There's the table between the two parties—let's say, here it's Palestinians and Israelis—but then there are these two internal tables among the Palestinians and among the Israelis where the real, even greater obstacles lie, so it's very true.

And with tribes, the intra-tribal dynamics are often even more complicated than the inter-tribal dynamics. I find that that's actually one of the, to me, one of the key pieces of work that needs to be done, as we tend to focus on the inter- aspect, the inter-organizational, inter-community groups, but actually the intra- aspects need to be addressed even more so that, for example, I remember, when we were working, doing some work in Northern Ireland many years ago, the thought was, "Okay, how do we create dialogue between Catholics and protestants?" No, actually we needed to create dialogue first among Catholics and among protestants to prepare them for the Catholic-Protestant conversation.

I would say, as third siders, as mediators, we need to really pay attention to the internal dynamics as much as to the external dynamics, and often find that what happens, often, even in organizations or in families, for example, if you're engaged in a negotiation, let's say you're negotiating something with a customer or negotiating to buy a house or doing something like that to sell something, we focus on it as a negotiation. We bring our minds and we think of it as a negotiation and we think of what's our strategy and so on, but when it comes to dealing with our child or our parent or a co-worker or a colleague at work, in other words inside the family or inside the organization, we don't think we need to prepare.

We think, "Oh well, it's just... That's just Maria. That's just Juan." Or whatever it is, but it's like, no, actually those internal negotiations require just as much going to the balcony, thinking through our BATNAs, thinking through our interests, thinking through their interests, deep listening to them, reframing, looking for solutions as any external negotiation does.

Particularly given the psychological dynamics, the trauma situation like you're working there in Gaza, Ingrid, I would say the more we can focus on the internal and start by focusing on the internal, the more we'll serve the external—which is the whole premise of the course is to start within and then go and proceed without. How do we stay connected with ourselves and with our own internal dynamics as we connect with the other?

Participant 5: Well, thank you very much. That's very helpful. I will keep you posted with the ongoing process in Gaza.

William: Please. Please do. Much success to you.

Participant 5: Thank you.