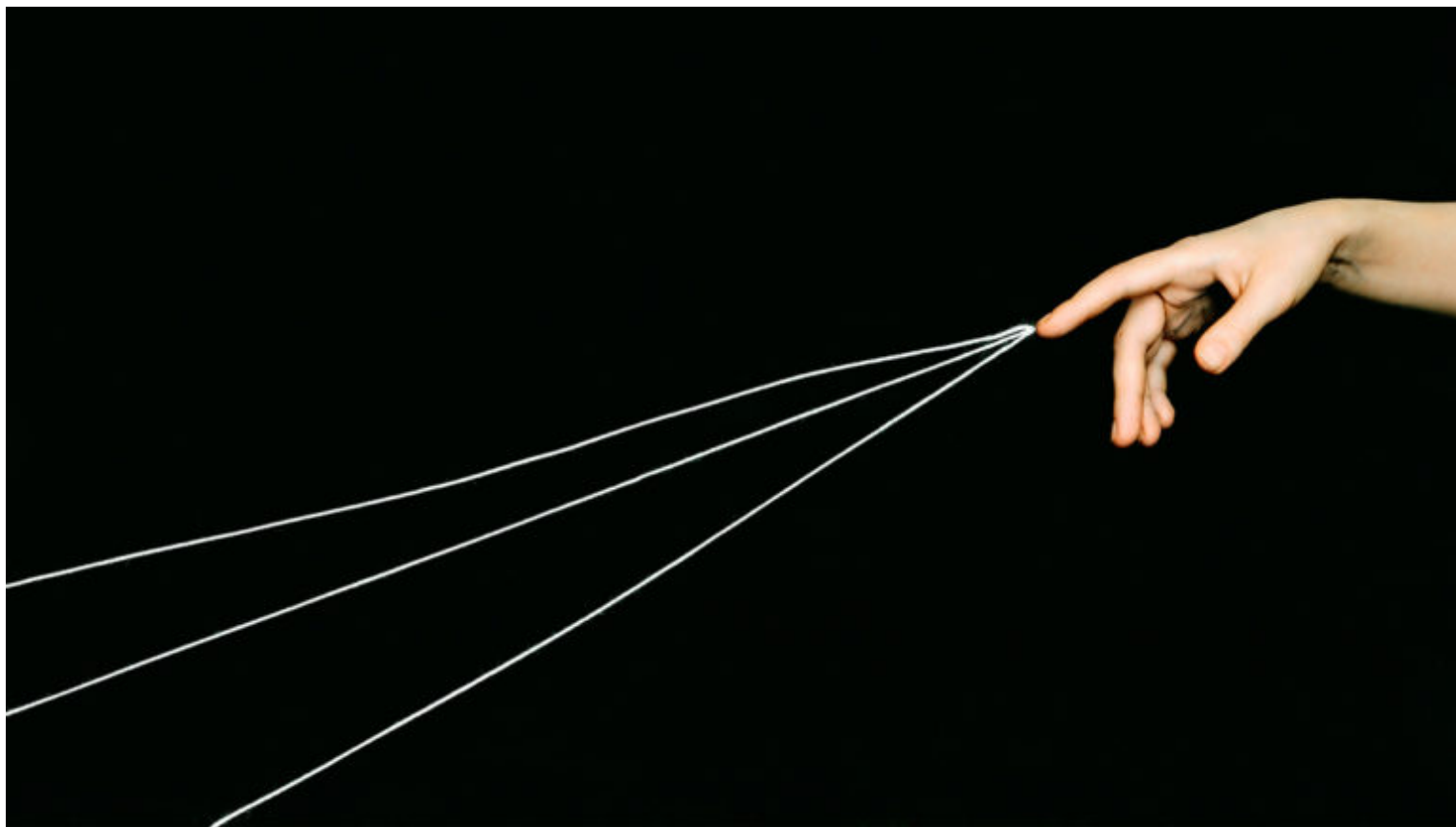


GENDER

How Women Can Get What They Want in a Negotiation

by [Suzanne de Janasz](#) and [Beth Cabrera](#)

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VANDAL PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

Tara, an MD/PhD who works for a large public university, contacted one of us (Suzanne) a few weeks after participating in a negotiation workshop she ran, wanting to share some positive news about successfully negotiating an 11% pay increase. A faculty member for six years, she had come to learn that she was not only underpaid but also had a higher teaching and clinic load than others in her group. She, like many women, accepted her job offer without negotiating.

How common is Tara's situation? Research suggests that 20% of women never negotiate at all. A woman who opts not to negotiate her starting salary upon graduation will forgo an average of \$7,000 the first year, and will lose between \$650,000 and \$1 million over the course of a 45-year career. Why would women leave money on the table? There are several factors. When selecting metaphors for the process of negotiation, men pick "winning a ballgame," while women pick "going to the dentist." Expectations drive behavior. If women see negotiation as a chore, they either don't negotiate or do so in ways that can hurt the outcome. There is also the (very real) fear, backed by research, that negotiating may come at the cost of being disliked.

The good news is that negotiating skills can be enhanced. Based on a growing body of research on gender in negotiations, combined with burgeoning research on positivity and mindfulness, we offer five strategies that can help women both choose to engage and perform more effectively in negotiations. They include:

- preparing fully
- cultivating positive emotions
- boosting emotional intelligence
- negotiating communally
- negotiating a package

Preparing Fully

In general, people don't like doing what they believe they're not good at, and often opt not to engage in activities in which failure is likely. The more we fear something, the longer and more fervently we stay away from it, and the greater power we give it — a vicious cycle. How many people shrink at the thought of public speaking...and avoid it at all costs? Investing effort in preparing for a negotiation — knowing what you want and why, thinking through acceptable alternatives, and developing specific strategies for being persuasive — can significantly increase your confidence and competence. Moreover, thinking through other desirable outcomes or alternatives will give you flexibility and comfort, knowing that you don't have to take whatever is offered.

Negotiating



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advance further embeds the skills and cognitive and behavioral readiness for the negotiation, increasing the chances of success even more.

Cultivating Positive Emotions

Positive emotions can help women negotiate more effectively by increasing their willingness to seek mutually beneficial solutions and improving their ability to engage in creative thinking to identify a wider range of options. People in positive moods prefer collaboration over competition. By cultivating positive moods, women will be more likely to work to achieve integrative gains — asserting their needs while encouraging the other party to do the same. This will increase the probability of reaching a mutually satisfying, optimal agreement.

Research demonstrates that people experiencing positive affect show patterns of thought that are more flexible, unusual, integrative, and open than those whose affect is negative or neutral. Thinking of a joyful memory helped students perform better on a standardized test, and boosting the moods of medical students by giving them candy improved their accuracy and creativity. Prior to a negotiation, women can use positive priming (thinking

Once Tara started gathering salary data from Glassdoor and other reliable sources, she began to understand her worth, and she committed to taking steps to achieve parity. Compared with men, women are less likely to be aware of, and are more uncomfortable expressing, their value in dollars. Tara's preparation helped her to overcome this barrier. Going into a salary negotiation with such data, along with a planned and persuasive explanation of achievements and capabilities that warrant a higher salary, can greatly increase one's confidence in and expectation of a successful outcome. Visualizing or practicing (by role playing, for example) the negotiation in

about something positive or engaging in a joyful activity) to increase positive emotions, resulting in greater creativity, openness, and willingness to collaborate, all of which are essential to successful negotiation.

Boosting Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence involves an awareness of one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Being more aware of her emotions can boost a woman's confidence in negotiating. It lowers the intensity of emotions and reduces reactivity by providing a moment in which to consider how best to respond. This emotional control can help women negotiate more successfully and give them greater self-assurance, especially in difficult situations.

With increased confidence, women will be more likely to assert their needs. Confidence may also reduce anxiety about negotiating, which women experience to a greater degree than men. This can increase the likelihood that women choose to enter a negotiation to begin with. And a greater awareness of the emotions of others during a negotiation can help women better understand their needs and interests, which can make it easier to find integrative solutions.

Emotional intelligence can be developed through mindfulness. Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment — what's going on in the world around you, as well as your thoughts and feelings. Being mindful can, therefore, increase your emotional awareness. One of the best ways for women to become more mindful is to practice meditation. Focusing your attention on something like your breath, and bringing it back each time your mind wanders, even for a few minutes a day, builds your ability to stay focused. It has also been shown to decrease the emotional reactivity of the amygdala, which is activated when facing situations perceived to be dangerous, overwhelming, or threatening.

Negotiating Communally

While male (or masculine) negotiators may win the battle but lose the war because of their competitiveness and unsympathetic approach to relationships, women may suffer on both accounts — issues and relationships — because focusing on their own needs causes others to view them as bossy and aggressive. One way to overcome this challenge is to reframe a

negotiation as though you are negotiating on behalf of a group or other individuals. For example, a woman who negotiates for increased resources to enhance the quality or the productivity of a department that has been stretched by downsizing and low morale will be seen as collaborative, not aggressive. Research demonstrates that women who adopt a “relational” or “I-we” strategy, in which they show concern for the other person’s perspective, can minimize the social cost of negotiation.

The ability to reframe the negotiation — even one with the goal of increasing one’s total compensation — into one where the other party also benefits is particularly important for women. The collaborative or communal mindset — enhanced by preparation and a positive mood — can help a woman find an I-we strategy that is good not just for her but also for the company or for some larger cause that she and the other party both believe in. Women would do well to consider the interests of the other party and suggest integrative solutions. For example, instead of saying, “Getting an MBA is important for my development as a manager,” frame your ask as a win-win: “With the additional financial and managerial skills I’ll gain in an MBA program, I’ll be able to assist in or lead more complex tasks or projects, enabling you to focus on more strategic and high-level priorities.”

Negotiating a Package

People from other cultures negotiate differently. Whereas Americans and Germans prefer a linear, one-issue-at-a-time approach, the French prefer a more holistic approach, and will move back and forth on issues that other negotiators may have believed were long since settled. While the latter approach might appear confusing or chaotic to some, the multi-issue or package approach to negotiating enables women to be viewed as less competitive or aggressive. When there is one issue, the negotiation is more likely to be seen as adversarial: win or lose. However, when multiple issues are considered, women can be more collaborative and problem-solving: “If I give you this, then you can give me that.” This will help them to be seen in a more positive way.

In the case of salary negotiation, women would help themselves by looking at the total compensation package, which might include paid time off, the hiring of an assistant, or a commuting allowance — all of which have monetary value — as opposed to salary alone.

Whereas a package offers opportunities to trade off issues that may have different value to each party, a singular salary focus can lead to an impasse (neither party budges), win/lose distributiveness (one party outmaneuvers the other), or compromise (both parties give up some of what they want). In some situations, salary ranges can be fixed, whereas performance bonuses, housing allowances, and other forms of compensation are not. Rather than saying, “My minimum salary expectation is \$120,000,” try, “I’d be willing to consider a salary that is below my minimum if we can agree on the total compensation package. In addition to my eligibility for year-end bonuses, I’d like to discuss administrative support, relocation assistance, and the possibility of two months’ rental in a furnished apartment, given my 800-mile relocation.” Ideally, this request is backed up by some data gathering of norms in the industry, the region, or, better still, the company.

Whether negotiating salary, company resources, or complex, multiyear contracts, women need to overcome challenges with respect to their motivation, confidence, and the expectations of others. By preparing effectively and enhancing their negotiation skills, they’ll increase their ability to come up with creative solutions that work better for everyone involved.

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Lisa Bragg 5 months ago

Thank you for the article, I do have to question your statement about Glassdoor. "Once Tara started gathering salary data from Glassdoor and other reliable sources..." You're implying that Glassdoor is a reliable source, however, the information is anonymous and anyone with any email address can write whatever they please. It is not verified in any way.

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