

Rules for negotiation

By [David Lewicki](#)

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[My dad](#) is an expert in negotiation. Sadly, I'm not sure I learned much from him. I can't haggle for a lower price on a car. I can't negotiate a salary. My chief negotiating technique is the "cave in." Not good.

But deep down, I believe one thing about conflict: it's constructive. If you're arguing with somebody about something, it's important. It means something to both of you. It may not mean what you think it means (ie, the conflict may not really be about the "thing" that you're arguing about), but it means something. If you can work your way through it, there is a way for you and the person with whom you're arguing to benefit.

One conflict-transformation organization I love is [Search for Common Ground](#). They do some of the more creative peacemaking work around the world.

On their website, they post these [practical guidelines](#) for transforming any conflict into a positive outcome:

Tips for Transforming Conflict

Most of us are aware that there is a constructive way to deal with conflict. Typically called a win-win, collaborative or cooperative approach, it can be applied to all kinds of conflict, from small everyday disputes between individuals to large ones that divide communities. So, how do we move from an adversarial approach to a common ground approach? Here are a few tips that might help:

1. **Accept that conflicts are a natural part of life:**
Conflict is the natural result of differences in the world.
2. **Treat conflict as an opportunity:**
Conflicts are neither positive nor negative in themselves.

3. **Be aware of your initial reaction and take a deep breath.**
4. **Choose your approach:**
There are always choices in a conflict. Some conflicts are just not worth dealing with.
5. **Listen and learn:**
Ask questions and listen. We all want to be heard and understood.
6. **Discover what's important:**
Disagreements over positions can cloud our common interests.
7. **Respect each other.**
8. **Be creative:**
There are always many different ways to solve a problem and meet a need.

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