

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Chris Voss | Negotiate as If Your Life Depended on It (Episode 165)

Like networking, the thought of negotiating can give even the most socially robust among us cold sweats. The stakes can be as low as a cheaper head of cabbage at the local farmers' market or as high as the future of your career when you're trying to get a significant raise at your annual performance review, but negotiation for most of us never reaches a point where lives are on the line -- unless you're today's guest.

In this episode we talk to Chris Voss, who retired as the lead international kidnapping negotiator for the FBI, is CEO of the Black Swan Group, and is the author of the national bestseller [*Never Split the Difference: Negotiating as If Your Life Depended on It*](#). From our conversation, you may be surprised to discover that the tactics for negotiating business deals and the safe release of hostages are startlingly similar. Listen, learn, and enjoy!

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How Am I Supposed to Do That?

When a difficult or impossible demand is made by the other side in a negotiation, simply ask (in a reasonable, late night radio DJ voice rather than with sarcasm): "How am I supposed to do that?"

"A good 'How am I supposed to do that?' question forces the person being asked to take a hard look at exactly what they're asking the other person to do. They may not change their mind -- that's not the point. The point is to get them to stop and think," says Chris.

This sounds almost too simple, but it really works. The next time you're faced with a seemingly impossible demand, ask an appropriate variation of the "How am I supposed to do that?" question and note here how it goes. You may not be trying to save hostages, but negotiating a reasonable bedtime with a third grader may prove just as challenging.

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Exercising Tactical Empathy

While on the phone trying to clear up a scheduling issue with an airline's customer service representative, Chris realized he was probably being a little harsher than necessary. When she put him on hold, he took a mental step back and tried to empathize with what this representative dealt with on a daily basis. She probably felt unfairly put upon and that Chris should feel lucky she was taking the time to try and help him. When she returned, he softened his tone and sincerely expressed how much he appreciated her time and generosity. Like magic, whatever conflict was brewing was gone. She likewise softened her tone and he was able to make changes without a fee.

By reinforcing someone's beliefs about themselves with tactical empathy (in this case, that the representative was being generous with her time by trying to help Chris), we can often defuse tense situations and misunderstandings. The next time you're in a borderline hostile conversation (especially with a customer service representative!), try to see the world from their perspective and meet them there. Note here how it goes.

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Why a “No” is Five Times Better Than “Yes” in Negotiation

Chris says: "You're barricaded -- you're mad at your wife. Instead of saying, 'Do you want to get out of this alive?' or 'Do you want to see your kids again?' or 'Do you want to live?' Those are all 'Yes' oriented questions. If you're really mad at your wife, I might say, 'Do you want your wife to win?' The answer to that is 'No!'"

"I know from my experience that when you say 'No,' you feel in control. It's five times as good as a 'Yes' will ever be -- across the board, in all circumstances."

We learned a bit about this counterintuitive notion when Alex Kouts joined us for our three-part series on negotiation ([which you should definitely check out here](#)). The funny thing is, it's harder than you might expect to get people to say “No” to you in a negotiation. Over the next five days, challenge yourself to get as many “No” answers in response to simple negotiations as possible, jot them down below, and tweet me about your experience:

[@jordanharbinger](#)

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The Black Swan Rule

We all think we're normal, when -- [as Chris explained with the three negotiator archetypes of The Analyst, The Assertive, and The Accommodator](#) -- our idea of normal matches only a third of the population. So if we're negotiating with someone in a way that would make us happy, we're ignoring two-thirds of the possibilities.

Instead, we want to read what someone needs and give them that instead of assuming they need the same things as us. [Download Chris' free guide outlining the three negotiator archetypes here](#) and learn how you can better pinpoint what those needs are.

Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here.](#)

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About



Join us as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers -- from legendary creators to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth -- and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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support@jordanharbinger.com

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