

Focusing on Interests

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

It is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern, since our most basic task is to evaluate the reasons and evidence that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). Focus on interests, not positions. In *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (3rd ed., pp. 42–57). Penguin Books.

Shell, G. R. (2018). The other party's interests. In *Bargaining for advantage: Negotiation strategies for reasonable people* (3rd ed., pp. 71–81). Penguin Books.

Questions

1. Generally speaking, what is the difference between a position and an interest during a conflict?
2. Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton present a lot of tactics for focusing on interests instead of positions. Shell then presents a lot of tactics for better understanding the interests of the other party.

According to all these authors, what tactics can you use in *preparing* for a negotiation to better understand both your own interests along with those of the other party? What can you do *during* the negotiation to further understand their interests while effectively communicate your own interests to them?

3. According to Fisher et al., why does focusing on interests instead of positions allow you to “be hard on the problem and soft on the people” (p. 55)? How does this also help resolve the tension between assertiveness and empathy, which we discussed a few weeks ago?
4. Putting all this together, why does focusing on interests tend to encourage wise agreements?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.