

Empathy & Assertiveness

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

Pruitt, D. G., & Kim, S. H. (2004). Overview. In *Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, and settlement* (3rd ed., pp. 3–14). McGraw-Hill.

Mnookin, R. H., Peppet, S. R., & Tulumello, A. S. (1996, July). The tension between empathy and assertiveness. *Negotiation Journal*, 12(3), 217–230.

Optional: Machiavelli, N. (2010, August). Cruelty and mercy. Is it better to be loved than feared? In J. Bennett (Ed. & Trans.), *The prince* (pp. 35–37). Early Modern Texts. <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/machiavelli1532part2.pdf> (Original work from 1532)

Questions

1. Dean Pruitt and Sung Hee Kim discuss four basic strategies for dealing with conflict. How would you describe each of these?
2. Explain in your own words Pruitt and Kim's definition of conflict.
3. According to Robert Mnookin, Scott Peppet and Andrew Tulumello, what is the difference between empathy and assertiveness? Why do many people tend to believe that these are necessarily opposed for negotiation and conflict resolution?
(For more on this issue, you might look over the optional reading from Niccolò Machiavelli, which seems to suggest these attitudes of empathy and assertiveness are in tension with each other.)
4. Mnookin et al. give about five benefits of empathy for a negotiator. What are these benefits? If all a person really cares about is his or her own self-interest during a negotiation, would these benefits be compelling enough to make such an egoist cultivate empathy?
5. They also give about four benefits of assertiveness? What are these? Are these benefits compelling enough for an egoist to be assertive?
6. When it comes to the three negotiation styles Mnookin et al. analyze, what are their respective advantages and disadvantages?
7. Finally, how do Mnookin et al. justify their claim that empathy and assertiveness are not inherently opposed, and that a good negotiator must be both?

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.