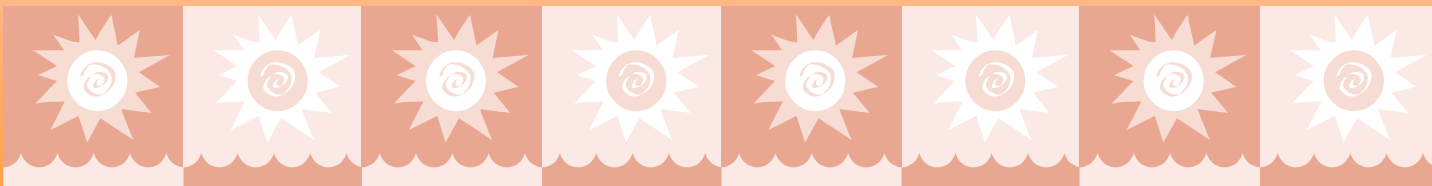


# Spring/Summer

## Newsletter 2016

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## The 9 Field-Tested, No-Fail Strategies To Help You Succeed In Your Next Negotiation

Posted by Chris Voss on April 18, 2016

These 9 negotiation strategies for success are based on my upcoming book:

**Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended.**

### 1. MIRROR WORDS SELECTIVELY

One of the quickest ways to establish a rapport and make your counterpart feel safe enough to reveal themselves is with a laser-like focus on what the other party has to say. Use tactics like slowing the conversation down, repeating their words back to them, allowing for silence and changing your tone of voice (try the “late night FM DJ voice”)

### 2. PRACTICE TACTICAL EMPATHY

Demonstrate to your counterpart that you see the nuances of their emotions. Proactively label their fears. Phrases like “It sounds like you are afraid of...” “It looks like you’re concerned about...” go a long way in disarming them. Also, list the worst things that the other party could say about you and say them before they can.

### 3. GET TO “NO”

Being pushed for “yes” makes people defensive, but saying “No” makes the speaker feel safe, secure, and in control, so trigger it. Ask no-oriented questions, like: “Is now a bad time to talk?” and “Have you given up on this project?”

### 4. TRIGGER “THAT’S RIGHT”

The moment you’ve convinced someone that you understand their dreams and feelings is the moment a negotiation breakthrough can happen. Trigger a “that’s right” response by summarizing and reaffirming how they feel and what they want.

### 5. RESIST COMPROMISE

Frame the conversation in such a way that your counterpart will unconsciously accept the limits you place on the discussion. Navigate deadlines to create a sense of urgency and anchor your counterpart’s emotions so that not accepting your offer feels like a loss.

### 6. CREATE THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

Don’t try to force your opponent to admit that you are right. Ask questions, that begin with “How?” or “What?” so your opponent uses mental energy to figure out the answer.

### 7. GUARANTEE EXECUTION

Don’t let your work fall apart when you’re close to securing a deal: Identify the motivations of the players “behind the table” and spot liars by paying attention to body language; test if your counterpart’s “yes” is real by getting them to reaffirm their agreement at least three times. Use your own name and humor to break tension and show your human side.

### 8. BARGAIN HARD

Identify your counterpart’s negotiating style, prepare, prepare, prepare, and steel yourself to take a figurative punch these practices will give you the confidence you need for a tough conversation.

### 9. FIND BLACK SWANS

To uncover the “Unknown Unknowns” work to understand the other side’s position and worldview. Find common ground with them, and get some face time. These tactics will help you dig deeper and uncover the hidden variables of the situation.

# THE NINE FIELD-TESTED, NO-FAIL STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN YOUR NEXT NEGOTIATION

Adapted from  
*Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It*  
by Chris Voss and Tahl Raz

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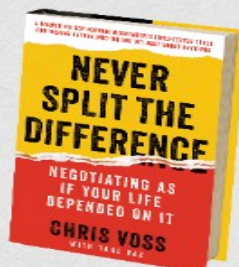
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# **Hostage negotiations: Psychological strategies for resolving crises**



Practical Police Psychology  
with [Dr. Laurence Miller](#)  
May 22, 2007

**Q:** *Our department is in the process of reformulating its hostage and crisis negotiation team. Any insights or advice about how to use psychology in the negotiation process?*

**A:** *The answer to that one is simple: hostage negotiation is all about psychology, and successful crisis negotiators are among the most skilled practical psychologists I've ever met. Think about it: In the typical hostage scenario, lives are at imminent risk of violent death at the hands of a depressed, suicidal, homicidal, delusional, drug-fueled, or cold-blooded hostage-taker, often in the midst of a chaotic and uncontrolled workplace or family environment. Resolution of hostage crises may take hours or even days of incredibly focused and intense negotiation, and require the use of virtually every type of skilled communication strategy in the crisis intervention skillbox.*

## **Hostage Crises: Facts and Fiction**

*Fewer than 20 percent of law enforcement critical incidents deal with actual hostage taking, and most crises are successfully resolved without loss of life. In fact, containment and negotiation strategies yield a 95 percent success rate in terms of resolving a hostage crisis without fatalities to either hostages or hostage-takers (HTs), which is a remarkable statistic for any form of lifesaving crisis intervention strategy.*

*There are three especially dangerous periods during a hostage crisis. The first is the initial 15-45 minutes when confusion and panic are likely to be greatest. The second is during the surrender of the HTs, when strong emotions, ambivalence, and lack of coordination among HTs and crisis team members can cause an otherwise successful resolution to go bad.*

*Finally, tactical assault to rescue the hostages carries the highest casualty rate, probably for two interrelated reasons. First, the very fact that tactical intervention is necessary indicates that all reasonable attempts to resolve the crisis by negotiation have failed, and that violence against the hostages has already taken place, or is imminent. Second, if a firefight ensues, the resulting panic and confusion may result in hostages being inadvertently killed or injured.*



Police gather near the scene of a standoff in Statesboro, Ga. The two suspects, a man and a woman, told police they were armed with a homemade explosive device, authorities said. More than 13 hours into the standoff, police were still negotiating with the pair, said Trooper Larry Schnall, a spokesman for the Georgia State Patrol. (AP Photo/Lewis Levine)

## **Crisis Response Team Structure**

*Consistent with the evolving conceptualization of law enforcement crisis teams as multidimensional response units, the term used to describe these teams has broadened from hostage negotiation per se, to crisis negotiation teams, and the techniques and strategies are similar across the different types of crises they deal with. Different departments may have varying team structures, depending on their individual needs, but some basic, universal components of crisis team structure include the following.*



*The team leader is a senior officer who organizes the crisis response team, selects its members, plans and oversees training, and makes deployment decisions in emergencies. His or her role may overlap with that of the on-scene commander, who is the person in charge of the actual hostage crisis. This individual is responsible for everything that goes on at the crisis scene, from establishing perimeters and traffic control, to directing the activity of negotiators, to deploying the tactical team, to liaising with emergency medical and community services.*

*Of course, the essence of a hostage crisis response team is the negotiator. The preferred model is to have one primary negotiator and one or more secondary or backup negotiators. The backups take over if the primary negotiator is unable to establish sufficient communication with the hostage taker, if there are language or cultural barriers involved, or if the primary negotiator needs a break after many hours of talking.*

*The job of the intelligence officer job is to gather information about the hostage-taker and hostages — including family members, past criminal and/or mental health treatment history, demographics, identity of the hostages and their relation to the HT, and any other intelligence that will be useful in planning and carrying out the negotiation. Sometimes this information is available and sometimes it isn't.*

*The role of the communications officer is to keep in contact with all of the individuals and agencies who are important in managing the crisis, such as firefighting and emergency medical services, local electrical power and phone companies, public transportation agencies, local businesses, and the media. Many departments have a public information officer who is charged with the specific duty of timely, accurate, and rumor-free information to the media and general public, without compromising the operation.*

*The tactical team consists of a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) unit, specialized marksmen, and other professionals whose sole job is to make a forced entry if and when it is determined by the on-scene commander that negotiations have failed and that hostages are in imminent danger.*

*Considering that the highest fatality rate in hostage crises occurs during tactical incursion, the decision to order such an action is an excruciatingly difficult one. In some cases, no actual forced entry may occur, but other tactical measures may be utilized, e.g. sniper action against the HTs, or sending in gas or flash-bangs to immobilize the HTs or flush them out. Again, these measures are to be used with extreme caution and only as a last resort, when life is in immediate danger.*

*Finally, many crisis teams include a team psychologist who generally has two main roles: (1) participation in team development, training, and selection of personnel; and (2) operational assistance during the crisis itself, including monitoring of negotiation progress, psychological profiling of hostages and HTs, assessment of danger and risk level, monitoring the mental status of negotiators and other personnel at the scene, and participating in both operational and critical incident stress debriefings following the incident.*

### **Hostage Crisis Response: Basic Protocol**

*Just as the basic guidelines for emergency medical procedures must be adapted to the needs of each individual case, so should the following protocol for the psychological principles and practices of hostage and crisis negotiation be thought of as an outline that can be flexibly adapted and modified according to the needs of the situation.*

*The first priority is to isolate and contain the HT and to secure the perimeter. The goal is to keep the HT in and keep others out. As a general rule, the perimeter should be large enough to allow freedom of movement of the tactical and negotiating teams, and small enough to be kept under observation and control by the authorities.*

*More than one perimeter, i.e., inner and outer, may be necessary.*



Ambulance workers load Clifford Lala into an ambulance in Kenner, La. Friday, June 16, 2006. Lala was held hostage by a suspect in the shooting death of Cmdr. Octavious Gonzales of the St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff's Office. (AP Photo/Bill Haber)



A Louisiana State Police officer, right, escorts John Lee Cheek after he was taken into custody ending a hostage situation in Kenner, La., Friday, June 16, 2006

*An associated need is to provide for scene control, which involves the dual task of working around the realities of the surrounding community, and where possible, getting the surrounding community to work around the needs of the crisis team. This includes marshalling medical services, controlling local traffic, dealing with the media, and keeping the surrounding community sufficiently informed to protect their safety.*

*Obviously, some form of communication must be established with the HT because the sooner you begin a dialog, the less time he has to consider drastic options. While face-to-face contact between the negotiator and the HT is categorically discouraged because of the potential danger involved, any safe means of communication should be established as soon as possible. For convenience,*



telephone contact is most commonly used, sometimes by means of a special throw phone with a dedicated line.

### **General Communication Strategies in Hostage Negotiation**

While always striving to customize your communications approach, based on your understanding of the HT's motives and personality, there are a number of general recommendations for dealing with hostage and crisis situations in general.

First, when beginning negotiations, try to minimize background distractions, such as more than one person speaking at a time, background radio chatter, road noise, etc. If there is noise at the HT's end, ask him if he can go to a quieter part of the room, speak up a little, or otherwise enhance the clarity of the communication channel.

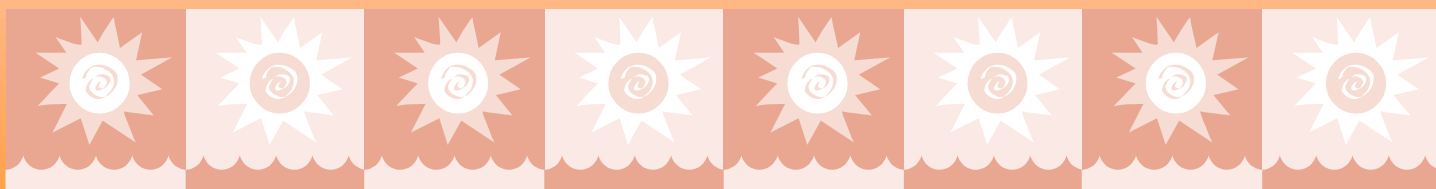
Open your dialog with an introduction and statement of purpose: "This is Sgt. Bruce McGill of the Metropolitan Police Department Crisis Unit. I'm here to listen to you and to try to make sure everybody stays safe." Keep the introduction as simple as possible, and always strive for honesty and credibility. Keep your voice firm but calm, and convey your confidence in the fact that this is a temporary crisis that will be resolved safely.

To build rapport, ask what the HT likes to be called. When in doubt, address him respectfully. Try to use a name that is familiar to him. If you're not sure, don't automatically assume that William will respond favorably to "Bill" or "Willy." If no first name is available, use respectful titles, like "Mr. Smith." If the name is unknown, use "sir," rather than "pal" or "buddy."

Speak slowly and calmly. People's speech patterns tend to mirror the tone of the dominant conversation, so provide a model of slow, calm, clear communication from the outset. This doesn't mean speaking in a mechanical, droning monotone, but avoid letting your pitch rise or your speech rate quicken excessively in response to frustration, irritation, or provocation. Set the standard of mature, adult conversation from the outset.

Adapt your conversation to HT's vocabulary level. You want to avoid either talking over the head of the HT or talking down to him or trying to mimic his pattern or level of speech too closely. A few minutes of conversation should allow you to adapt your own speech to his style and rhythm. Of course, if the HT's native language is not your own, a negotiator fluent in his language would be ideal, but if this is not possible, a skilled interpreter should be available.

Even with foul-mouthed HTs, avoid using unnecessary profanity yourself. Remember that people who are stressed or angry are more likely to use profanity. You are trying to model mature, adult speech and behavior in order to calm the situation. So, just as you modulate your voice tone in the direction of greater control and rationality, do the same with your speech content. This doesn't mean you have to orate like a church pastor: you can keep it real, just use a bit of verbal decorum and respect.



*For emotional HTs, allow productive venting, but deflect dangerous escalation of speech tone and content. In many instances, the whole rationale for the hostage situation is so the HT can “make a point” or “tell my story.” Good. If that’s what he wants, allow him to freely express his frustrations and disappointments, but don’t let venting become ranting or spewing, which can lead to further loss of control. Instead, modulate your own speech style and content in a calming direction.*

*If you’re not sure what the HT is saying, ask for clarification. Clarity is a general principle of negotiation and all forms of crisis intervention. Don’t respond to—or act on—a HT’s statement unless you’re reasonably sure you know what he means. Remember that asking someone to help you understand what they’re saying is a sign of interest, concern, and respect.*

*Focus your conversation on the HT, not the hostages. In most circumstances, the less the HT thinks about the hostages, the better. This is especially true where the hostages are not neutral parties, that is, where they may be family members or coworkers who have been targeted to make a point. Remember that hostages represent power and control to the hostage taker, so try not to do anything that will remind him of this fact.*

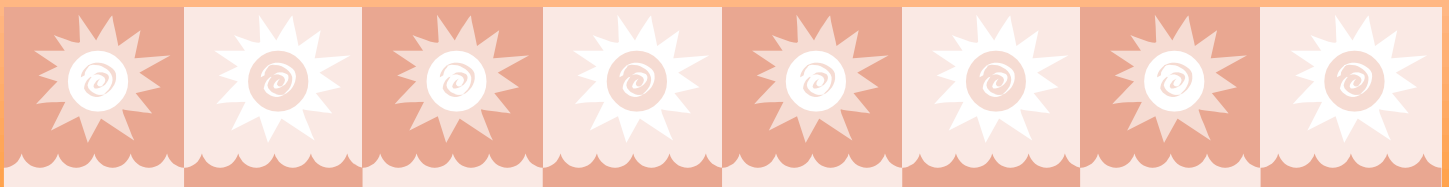
*Inquire about the welfare of all parties, but focus on the HT first, and then weave in concern for the other people: “Are you okay? Are you injured? Does anyone need medical attention? Is everybody safe for now?”*

*This is an exception to the general rule of not soliciting demands (see below), because you want to firmly establish your concern for everyone’s welfare, including the HT’s, from the outset. Also, if someone really does require emergency medical attention, you don’t want to overlook the opportunity to provide it early on.*

*Be supportive and encouraging about the outcome. Downplay the HT’s actions so far: “Right now, it’s only an attempted robbery, nobody’s been hurt [or if there has already been an injury or fatality:] “...nobody else has been hurt.” Remember, the goal is to keep violence from escalating from this point on.*

*If there is a chance of saving lives, then interpret the situation any positive way you can. If shots have been fired, point out that no one has yet been hurt. If injuries have occurred, emphasize the lack of fatalities so far. If a hostage has died, focus on saving the rest. The emphasis should always be on what the HT can still do to save his own life and score points in his favor, that whatever he has done so far, the situation is still salvageable:*

*“William, I want you to know that, even though the guy got shot [passive tense: it wasn’t completely your fault] in the foot [not a critical wound] at the beginning of this thing [everybody was confused], all kinds of unexpected things [you didn’t intend to cause harm] can happen in a panic situation. But you’ve done a good job of keeping things cool from that point on [you’re still in control, but in a positive way], and no one else has been hurt [you’re now part of the solution, not the problem]. That counts for a lot, and*





everybody here knows it [there's still hope of avoiding dire consequences]. Let's see if we can keep things peaceful for now so we can all come out of this safely, okay? [we want you to be safe, too, not just the hostages]"

Along with the above, compliment the HT for any positive actions he's taken so far. If the HT does something constructive, reinforce it. This applies whether the action is a major thing, like release of one or more hostages, or a seemingly minor thing like allowing the hostages to eat or go to the bathroom, or keeping the phone line open.

The aim here is to establish a pattern of constructive actions that allow the HT to reap repeated positive reinforcement, leading ultimately to his surrender with no further injuries to anyone.



### ***Demands and Deadlines***

One of the defining characteristics of most hostage crises is the presence of some form of demand, which may range from the immediately practical (food, transportation) to the more grandiose (release of political prisoners, access to media) to the bizarre or psychotic (freedom from conspiratorial persecution; emancipation of downtrodden classes). Most demands will be of the first type, and most experts would agree with the following principles and practices.

The standard operating procedure in hostage negotiations is to make the HT work for everything he gets by extracting a concession in return. The is to maintain your bargaining position without unduly agitating the HT and triggering a violent confrontation. Within these parameters, don't give anything without getting something in return: "The electricity turned on? I'll work on that, but I'll need you do something for me, okay? Can you keep the phone line open so we can keep communicating while they're hooking up the cable?"

Other guidelines include: don't solicit demands; don't anything not explicitly asked for; and don't deliver more than absolutely necessary to fulfill the request. The conventional wisdom is to never say "no" to a demand, but that's not the same as saying yes. The negotiators job is to deflect, postpone, and modify: "Okay, you want a helicopter out of here, right? I'll see what I can do. Meanwhile, tell me..."

When negotiating for release of multiple hostages, start with the most vulnerable or least desirable, from the HT's standpoint. Where the hostages are strangers to the HT, as in the case of robberies, and where the HT has specific, utilitarian demands (food, escape), many HTs will relinquish hostages that they perceive as being too much trouble to keep around, such as sick or injured victims, crying children, or overly emotional hostages, while holding on to the more healthy and manageable ones. As in any bargaining maneuver, let the HT make the first offer, that is, how many hostages he's willing to release. Remember, it is better to get one or two people out safely now, rather than

Where there is only a single hostage or very few hostages, and where the hostages are known to the HT, as in a family argument or workplace beef, the situation is more dangerous because the hostages have a particular personal or symbolic value to the HT. Additionally, there is a greater chance that the HT may be exhausted, agitated, intoxicated, delusional, suicidal, homicidal, or any combination of the above. He may not care about negotiating for demands because he's already resolved to kill everyone including himself. In such cases, conventional hostage negotiating strategies may overlap with suicide intervention and other crisis intervention strategies.

A common feature of HT demands is that they often come with a deadline: "I want that car here by 12 noon, or someone's going to die." To begin with, although deadline demands are relatively common, very few deaths have actually occurred as the direct result of a deadline not being met, especially in more common robbery or family dispute hostage crises (political hostage-taking may present unique challenges).

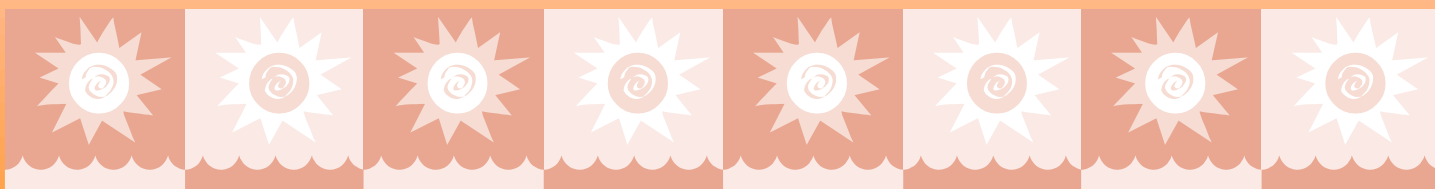
Although this may seem obvious, don't set deadlines yourself. If the HT sets a deadline, record it but don't mention it again if he doesn't bring it up. The goal is to ignore the deadline and let it pass by keeping the HT engaged in conversation about something else. If there has been no conversation with the HT for a while, try to initiate contact prior to the deadline and keep him engaged and distracted.

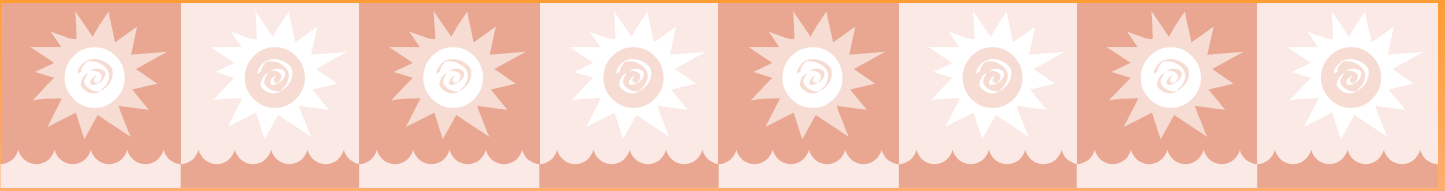
Use the passage of time to expend adrenalin and let fatigue set in, but beware of total exhaustion which may lead to heightened irritability and impulsive action. As a general rule, however, the more time that has passed without injury, the more likely is a nonlethal outcome to the crisis.

### **The Surrender Ritual**

Nobody likes to surrender. Yet, by definition, the successful resolution of a hostage crisis entails the safe release of the hostages and surrender of the HT to law enforcement authorities. Thus, anything the negotiating team can do to make this easier for the HT will work in favor of saving lives. Trying to manipulate or intimidate a HT into capitulating may have the opposite effect because few people want to give up as a sign of weakness. Rather, **a successful resolution will usually involve convincing the HT to come out on his own with as much dignity preserved as possible.**

On the strength of practical experience, a basic protocol, or surrender ritual, has evolved to guide negotiators in their efforts to safely resolve a crisis. As with all such general guidelines, each negotiating team must adapt this system to their particular situation and type of HT. To begin with, any plan must be understood, agreed to, and followed by all members of the negotiating and tactical teams. Work out how the HT will come out, how the arrest will be made, and what will happen next. Remember, the team's initial version of the plan is not the last word; the plan may go back and forth between the negotiator and the HT until a mutually agreeable sequence is established.





*When dealing with the HT, avoid the use of words like “surrender,” “give up,” or other terms that connote weakness and loss of face. Use whatever euphemisms seem appropriate: “coming out” is a preferred term because it implies a proactive decision by the subject himself to resolve the crisis. To begin the discussion of coming out, emphasize to the HT what he has to gain by this action at the present time. Be realistic but optimistic. Minimize any damage done so far. Emphasize what bad things have not happened and the subject’s role in preventing further harm:*

*“William, we understand you felt you had no choice but to shoot that guard when he went for his gun – it was a split-second decision, right? But I want to thank you for keeping rest of those people in the bank safe while we talked this out. That’s going to count for a lot if we can end this now without anyone else getting hurt.”*

*Find out what assurances are needed by the HT and if the team can accommodate them. Be sensitive to personal and cultural issues involving pride and respect. Discuss various coming-out scenarios and identify a mutually acceptable plan. As in any kind of negotiation, the more input the subject has, the more he feels that the plan is his own as well as yours, the more likely he is to comply – what business negotiators call buy-in. In planning for a successful resolution, let the subject set the pace; if he is agreeing to come out at all, this is not the time to rush things.*

*Once the final plan is put together, now the task becomes to make sure everybody understands what they’re supposed to do. First, clarify the plan with the negotiating and tactical teams. Then carefully explain to the HT what will happen and what to expect. Ask him to repeat it back to you. Make it clear to him that this rehearsal is not because you distrust him or think he’s stupid, but for his own safety and to make sure everybody follows the agreement he and you have worked out. For example:*

*“Okay, here’s what we agreed on. You’re going to take off your jacket so everyone can see you in the tee-shirt, see that you’re not hiding anything. Don’t carry anything out or have anything in your hands or pockets. Open the front door slowly with your left hand and keep your right hand on your head. When you step out onto the front porch, slowly put your right hand on your head, too. Then drop slowly to your knees and keep your hands on your head. Remember, the guiding word is slow, slow, slow — no sudden moves. When you’re on the ground, you’ll see the SWAT guys approach you. They’ll probably have their weapons drawn, and one of them will have a large black shield, so don’t move; it’s just their normal procedure. If they order you to lie down and put your hands behind your back, do it. Do whatever they tell you. They’re going to restrain you. They may seem a little rough, but they’re not trying to hurt you, that’s just their procedure. After they’re sure you’re secure, they’ll either walk you or carry you to the holding area, and one of our team will meet you there. We want to make sure this goes smoothly like we planned, so tell it back to me like I just explained it.”*

*While following standard procedures for control and restraint, the tactical team should avoid any unnecessary verbal or physical roughness during the arrest. In keeping with the strict division of negotiating and tactical roles, the negotiator should not be the*





*arresting officer. During and after the arrest, the negotiator should maintain engagement, rapport, and communication with the HT. If possible —and after any necessary on-scene first aid has been applied and the subject has been read his legal rights — a brief informational debriefing with the HT should occur in a secure place close to the scene. This is to gather any information that might be forgotten or discarded later on, and also gives the negotiator the opportunity to praise the subject for his contribution to successfully resolving this crisis.*

*Why? Remember the point about “repeat customers” in the criminal justice system. You don’t want the subject to think the whole negotiation was just some kind of trick to get him to give up, because this may have repercussions for future communications and interactions with the same or different subjects, whether they involve hostage-taking or other incidents. In a very real sense, the negotiation is never really over, even during the arrest and informational debriefing, and throughout the trial and incarceration process. You want your team and your department to maintain the reputation of being tough, but fair and honorable throughout all your interactions with the community. Always be looking ahead to the next incident.*



# The Insider's Secret to Relationship Success is the Best Negotiation Advice

Posted by Chris Voss on January 25, 2016



Great negotiation is great relationship building. It's what effective businesspeople use to make rain. Let's dig into it.

There are two key components to this: listening and understanding.

The importance of both can't be overlooked. Just like the simple molecule for water, (H<sub>2</sub>O) without either component you don't have water. You can't double-up on one to make up for the lack of the other.

There are two distinct phases here.

## Phase #1: Listening

Trigger the information flow of what to listen for.

Start with pre-selected open-ended questions that you will use over and over because they are so good.

Jacobson gives 2 examples of perfect open-ended questions to lead off with: "What is most important to you?" and "What business problems can we help you solve?"

"What" and "How" open-ended questions are the platinum level questions. You can pretty much eliminate the rest of the interrogatives (who, when, where & why) for 90% of the conversation. Closed-ended questions (those that start with a verb – "do" "does" "is" etc.) get closed-ended answers.

Always ask your "What" and "How" questions driving at the same issues in twos or threes. Notice Jacobson gives us two great ones. I'd add "What's the biggest challenge you face?" to this group.

## Phase #2: Understanding

Nail this part with effective clarification: LMS – label, mirror, summarize – eliciting a "that's right".

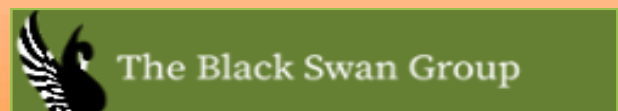
Here's the negotiation insider's secret to the second part – showing you actually understand is even more important than caring because while it's nice if you care, if you don't understand, you can't help.

A label is a statement or an observation that starts off with "It seems like..." or "It sounds like..." or "It looks like..." followed by your silence so they can respond. These are critical and your business partners will love that you are paying attention. Please don't let the simple elegance of these cause you to underestimate the effectiveness of simplicity. (In our online negotiation course, we've got several lessons that address this tool and the variety of ways to use it if you'd like to dig in with more depth.)

Mirror: Any words, terms, or ideas you're not clear on, simply repeat the 1-3 critical words you need to clarify. Just 1-3 words; and word for word. This is the FBI hostage negotiation skill of mirroring and it is magic. You'll love having people expand on ideas when you use this.

Summarize what they've said. If you don't get a "That's right" (word for word) you're off track and you don't have a green light to proceed. We've got a saying "That's right = green light". Proceeding without "That's right" is the equivalent of crossing a railroad track with the yellow light flashing – you might be OK, but it's kind of devastating when you're not.

Follow this communication/negotiation advice and you know what? They'll forget you have a hoodie on!



Make it rain!

## How To Be Resilient: 8 Steps To Success When Life Gets Hard



*"Stick with it!"*

*"Be resilient!"*

*"Never give up!"*

I see a lot of stuff about resilience, persistence and grit. What I don't see is a lot of legitimate info on how to actually increase those qualities.

How can we be more resilient? How can we shrug off huge challenges in life, persist and — in the end — succeed?

So I looked at the most difficult scenarios for insight. (Who needs resilience in easy situations, right?)

**When life and death is on the line, what do the winners do that the losers don't?**

**Turns out surviving the most dangerous situations has some good lessons we can use to learn how to be resilient in everyday life.**

Whether it's dealing with unemployment, a difficult job, or personal tragedies, here are insights that can help.

### **1) Perceive And Believe**

*"The company already had two rounds of layoffs this year but I never thought they would let me go."*

*"Yeah, the argument was getting a little heated but I didn't think he was going to hit me."*

**The first thing to do when facing difficulty is to make sure you recognize it as soon as possible.**

Sounds obvious but we've all been in denial at one point or another. What do people who survive life-threatening situations have in common?

**They move through those "stages of grief" from denial to acceptance *faster*.**

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

They immediately begin to recognize, acknowledge, and even accept the reality of their situation... They move through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance very rapidly.

What's that thing doctors say when they're able to successfully treat a medical problem? *"Good thing we caught it early."*

**When you stay oblivious or live in denial, things get worse — often in a hurry. When you know you're in trouble you can act.**

Nobody is saying paranoia is good but research shows a little [worrying is correlated with living a longer life](#).

(For more on how a little negativity can make you happier, click [here](#).)

Okay, like they say in AA, you admitted you have a problem. What's the next thing the most resilient people do?



## 2) Manage Your Emotions

Sometimes when SCUBA divers drown they still have air in their oxygen tanks. Seriously.

How is this possible? Something goes wrong, they panic, and instinctively *pull the regulator out of their mouth*.

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

M. Ephimia Morphew, a psychologist and founder of the Society for Human Performance in Extreme Environments, told me of a series of accidents she'd been studying in which scuba divers were found dead with air in their tanks and perfectly functional regulators. "Only they had pulled the regulators out of their mouths and drowned. It took a long time for researchers to figure out what was going on." It appears that certain people suffer an intense feeling of suffocation when their mouths are covered. That led to an overpowering impulse to uncover the mouth and nose. The victims had followed an emotional response that was in general a good one for the organism, to get air. But it was the wrong response under the special, non-natural, circumstances of scuba diving. When you're having trouble breathing what's more natural than to clear an obstruction from your mouth?

Now just a brief second of clear thinking tells you this is a *very* bad idea while diving — but when you panic, you can't think clearly.

Rash decision making rarely delivers optimal results in everyday life either.

Resilient people acknowledge difficult situations, keep calm and evaluate things rationally so they can make a plan and act.

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

Al Siebert, in his book [The Survivor Personality](#), writes that "The best survivors spend almost no time, especially in emergencies, getting upset about what has been lost, or feeling distressed about things going badly.... For this reason they don't usually take themselves too seriously and are therefore hard to threaten."

(For methods Navy SEALs, astronauts and the samurai use to keep calm under pressure, click [here](#).)

So you know you're in trouble but you're keeping your cool. Might there be a simple way to sidestep all these problems? Yeah.

## 3) Be A Quitter

Many of you might be a little confused right now: *"A secret to resilience is quitting? That doesn't make any sense."*

**What do we see when we look at people who survive life and death situations? Many of them were smart enough to bail early.**

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

"...It's a matter of looking at yourself and assessing your own abilities and where you are mentally, and then realizing that it's better to turn back and get a chance to do it again than to go for it and not come back at all." We are a society of high achievers, but in the wilderness, such motivation can be deadly...

The best way to take a punch from a UFC fighter and to survive a hurricane are the same: *"Don't be there when it hits."*

You quit baseball when you were 10 and quit playing the piano after just 2 lessons. Nobody sticks with *everything*. You can't.

When the company starts laying people off, there's always one guy smart enough to immediately jump ship and preemptively get a new job.

And some people are smart enough to realize, "I am never going to be a great Tango dancer and should double my efforts at playing poker."

**And you know what results this type of quitting has? It makes you happier, reduces stress and increases health.**

Via [Think Like a Freak: The Authors of Freakonomics Offer to Retrain Your Brain](#):

Wrosch found that people who quit their unattainable goals saw physical and psychological benefits. "They have, for example, less depressive symptoms, less negative affect over time," he says. "They also have lower cortisol levels, and they have lower levels of systemic inflammation, which is a marker of immune functioning. And they develop fewer physical health problems over time."

You can do anything — [when you stop trying to do everything](#).

(For more on how to determine what you should stick with and what you should abandon, click [here](#).)

Okay, so maybe you can't bail and really do need to be resilient. What does the research say you can do to have more grit? It sounds crazy...

#### 4) Be Delusional

[Marshall Goldsmith](#) did a study of incredibly [successful people](#). After assembling all the data he realized the thing they all had in common.

And then he shouted: ***“These successful people are all delusional!”***

Via [Supersurvivors: The Surprising Link Between Suffering and Success](#):

“This is not to be misinterpreted as a bad thing. In fact, being delusional helps us become more effective. By definition, these delusions don’t have to be accurate. If they were totally accurate, your goals would be too low.” Goldsmith noticed that although illusions of control expose people to risk of failure, they do something else that is very interesting: they motivate people to keep trying even when they’ve failed... “Successful people fail a lot, but they try a lot, too. When things don’t work, they move on until an idea does work. Survivors and great entrepreneurs have this in common.” Crazy successful people and people who survive tough situations are all overconfident. [Very overconfident](#).

Some of you may be scratching your head: *“Isn’t step one all about not being in denial? About facing reality?”*

**You need to make a distinction between denial *about the situation* and overconfidence *in your abilities*.**

The first one is very bad, but the second one can be surprisingly good. **See the world accurately — but believe you are a rockstar.**

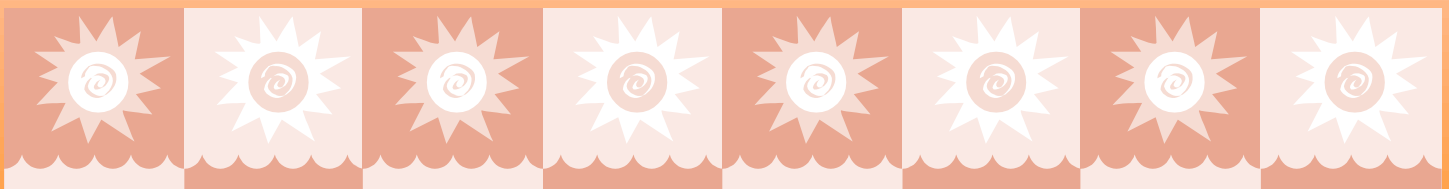
Via [Supersurvivors: The Surprising Link Between Suffering and Success](#):

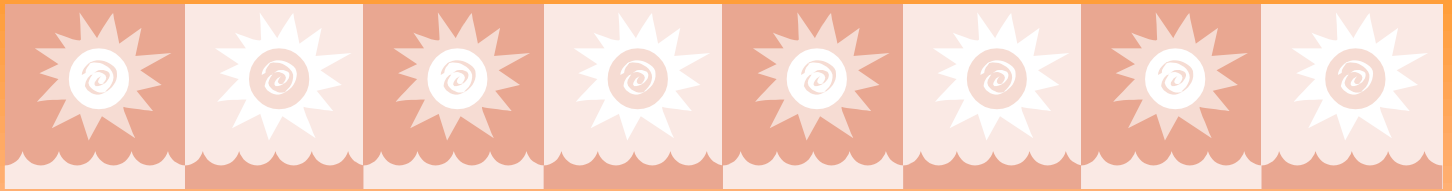
Denying or distorting a bad situation may be comforting in the short term, but it’s potentially harmful in the long run because it will be almost impossible to solve a problem unless you first admit you have one. In contrast, having an especially strong belief in one’s personal capabilities, even if that belief is somewhat illusory, probably helps you to solve problems... A useful, if somewhat simplistic, mathematical formula might be: a realistic view of the situation + a strong view of one’s ability to control one’s destiny through one’s efforts = grounded hope.

(For more on what the most successful people have in common, click [here](#).)

So this is how superheroes must feel: there’s definitely trouble, but you’re calm and you feel like you’re awesome enough to handle this.

But we need to move past feelings. What actions are going to see you through this mess?





### 5) Prepare... Even If It's Too Late For Preparation

Folks, I firmly believe there is no such thing as a “pretty good” alligator wrestler.

**Who survives life threatening situations? People who have done it before. People who have prepared.**

Now even if you can't truly prepare for a layoff or a divorce, you can work to have good productive habits and eliminate wasteful ones.

Good habits don't tax your willpower as much as deliberate actions and will help you be more resilient.

How do you survive a WW2 shipwreck and shark attacks? **Keep preparing for the future, even when you're in the midst of trouble.**

Via Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience:

As the days went by, he continued to concentrate on strategies for survival. At one point, a rubber life belt floated by and he grabbed it. He had heard that the Japanese would use aircraft to strafe shipwrecked Americans. The life belt could be blown up through a rubber tube. He cut the tube off and kept it, reasoning that if the Japanese spotted them, he could slip under water and breathe through the tube. He was planning ahead. He had a future in his mind, and good survivors always concentrate on the present but plan for the future. Thus, taking it day by day, hour by hour, and sometimes minute by minute, did Don McCall endure.

One caveat: as learning expert Dan Coyle recommends, make sure any prep you do is as close to the real scenario as possible.

Bad training can be worse than no training. When police practice disarming criminals they often conclude by handing the gun to their partner.

One officer trained this so perfectly that in the field he took a gun from a criminal — *and instinctively handed it right back*.

Via Make It Stick:

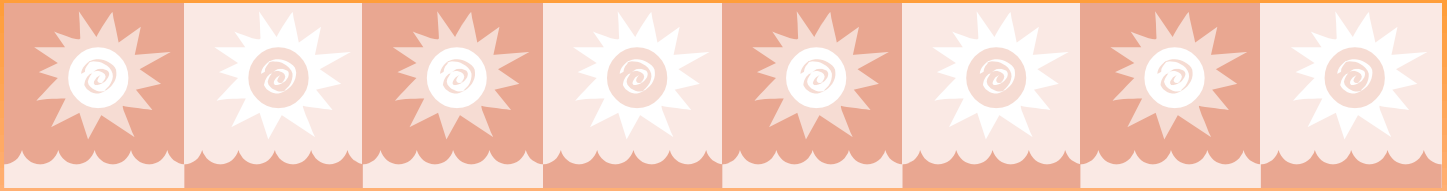
Johnson recounts how officers are trained to take a gun from an assailant at close quarters, a maneuver they practice by role-playing with a fellow officer. It requires speed and deftness: striking an assailant's wrist with one hand to break his grip while simultaneously wresting the gun free with the other. It's a move that officers had been in the habit of honing through repetition, taking the gun, handing it back, taking it again. Until one of their officers, on a call in the field, took the gun from an assailant and handed it right back again.

(For more on how to develop good habits — and get rid of bad ones, click here.)

You're expecting the best but prepared for the worst. Perfect. Is now the time to de-stress? Heck, no.







## 6) Stay Busy, Busy, Busy

**What's the best way to survive and keep your emotions in check when things are hard? "Work, work, work."**

Via [Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience](#):

Remember the saying "Get organized or die." In the wake of trauma, "Work, work, work," as Richard Mollica wrote. He is a psychiatrist at Harvard who studies trauma. "This is the single most important goal of traumatized people throughout the world." The hands force order on the mind.

When things go bad, people get sad or scared, retreat and distract themselves. That can quell the emotions, but it doesn't get you out of this mess.

**Resilient people know that staying busy not only gets you closer to your goals but it's also the best way to stay calm.**

**And believe it or not, we're all [happier when we're busy](#).**

(For more on what the most productive people in the world do every day, click [here](#).)

You're hustlin'. That's good. But it's hard to keep that can-do attitude when things aren't going well. What's another secret to hanging in there?

## 7) Make It A Game

In his book "[Touching the Void](#)," Joe Simpson tells the harrowing story of how he broke his leg 19,000 feet up while climbing a mountain.

Actually he didn't break his leg... he shattered it. Like marbles in a sock. His calf bone driven through his knee joint.

He and his climbing partner assumed he was a dead man. But he survived.

**One of his secrets was making his slow, painful descent into a game.**

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

Simpson was learning what it means to be playful in such circumstances: "A pattern of movements developed after my initial wobbly hops and I meticulously repeated the pattern. Each pattern made up one step across the slope and I began to feel detached from everything around me. I thought of nothing but the patterns." His struggle had become a dance, and the dance freed him from the terror of what he had to do.

How does this work? It's neuroscience. Patterned activities stimulate the same reward center cocaine does.

Via [Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience](#):

And tellingly, a structure within the basal ganglia is activated during feelings of safety, reward, and simply feeling great. It's called the striatum and drugs such as cocaine set it off, but so does the learning of a new habit or skill and the performance of organized, patterned activities...

Even boring things can be fun if you turn them into a game with stakes, challenges and little rewards.

And we can use this same system for everyday problems: *How many resumes can you send out today? Can you beat yesterday?*

**Celebrating "[small wins](#)" is something survivors have in common.**

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

Survivors take great joy from even their smallest successes. That is an important step in creating an ongoing feeling of motivation and preventing the descent into hopelessness. It also provides relief from the unspeakable stress of a true survival situation.

(For more on how to increase gratitude and happiness, click [here](#).)

You're a machine. Making progress despite huge challenges. What's the final way to take your resilience to the next level? Other people.

## 8) Get Help And Give Help

Getting help is good. That's obvious. But sometimes we're ashamed or embarrassed and fail to ask for it. Don't let pride get in the way.

What's more fascinating is that **even in the worst of times, giving help can help you.**

By taking on the role of caretaker we increase the feeling of [meaning in our lives](#). This helps people in the worst situations succeed. Leon Weliczker survived the Holocaust not only because of his resourcefulness — but also because he felt he had to protect his brother.

Via [Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience](#):

When his fifteen-year-old brother Aaron came in, Leon was suddenly filled with love and a feeling of responsibility for the two boys. He was shedding the cloak of the victim in favor of the role of the rescuer. Terrence Des Pres, in his book [The Survivor](#), makes the point that in the journey of survival, helping someone else is as important as getting help.

Sometimes being selfless is [the best way to be selfish](#). And the research shows that [givers are among the most successful people](#) and they [live longer](#).

Via [Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why](#):

Helping someone else is the best way to ensure your own survival. It takes you out of yourself. It helps you to rise above your fears. Now you're a rescuer, not a victim. And seeing how your leadership and skill buoy others up gives you more focus and energy to persevere. The cycle reinforces itself: You buoy them up, and their response buoys you up. Many people who survive alone report that they were doing it for someone else (a wife, boyfriend, mother, son) back home.  
(For more on how helping others can also help you, click [here](#).)

So once the threat is passed, once the dust has settled, can we have a normal life again? Actually, sometimes, life can be even better.

### Sum Up

So when life is daunting and we need resilience, keep in mind:

**Perceive And Believe**

**Manage Your Emotions**

**Be A Quitter**

**Be Delusional**

**Prepare... Even If It's Too Late For Preparation**

**Stay Busy, Busy, Busy**

**Make It A Game**

**Get Help And Give Help**

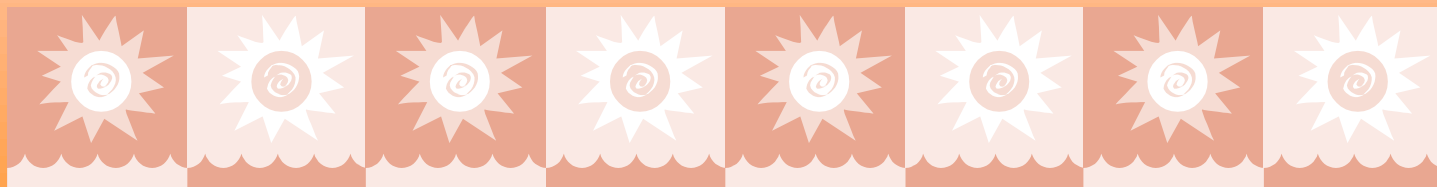
To live full lives some amount of difficulty is essential.

Richard Tedeschi, a psychologist who treats post-traumatic stress, said that “to achieve the greatest psychological health, some kind of suffering is necessary.”

You can meet life's challenges with resilience, competence and grace.

And when the troubles are over, science agrees: what does not kill you [can in fact make you stronger](#).

Written By: [Eric Barker](#) <http://www.bakadesuyo.com/2014/07/how-to-be-resilient/>



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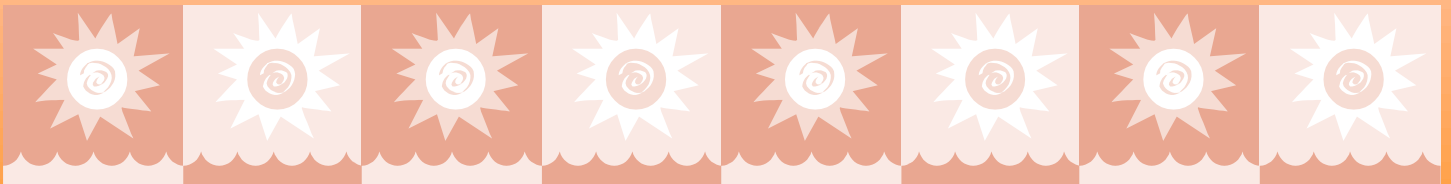




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