

# Tip Sheet

“think  
learn?  
succeed”

“smart training for clever people”

## 5 Ways to Beat Negotiation Nerves

Are you a nervous negotiator? If you're a woman it isn't surprising if you are. Around 70% of women feel nervous preparing for negotiation scenarios. So what do the remaining 30% of women do differently to the rest of us? The most important action they take is being well prepared. Here are the top five ways that you can be like excellent female negotiators and beat negotiation nerves through great preparation.

### Build a strong back-up plan

The best way to nip negotiation nerves in the bud, is to know exactly what you'll do if you're not happy with where the discussion is going. This is why you need a BATNA. Your BATNA is your plan for what you'll do if you walk away without closing the deal. Creating your back up plan involves four simple steps.

- Brainstorm all alternatives that are open to you, if you need to walk away without reaching agreement
- Out of those alternatives, isolate the best option. This is the one that is most attractive to you
- Rate its viability. This gives you a sense of whether using your back-up plan is a good, strong option
- Rate the likelihood that you'll need to fall back on your plan. The easiest way to do this is to use a scale of 1 to 10

Having a strong back up plan is the best way to get yourself off to a smooth start in negotiation. It only takes about 10 minutes to develop a plan, so don't skip this important stage when you're about to start negotiating.

### Be clear about your walk-away point

The name says it all. Your walk-away point is the stage at which you'll leave the negotiation if your needs are not met. During price negotiations, its relatively easy to work out your walk away point. It's the price you're not willing to pay or accept in a deal. In less concrete negotiations, its likely that your walk-away point will be defined by behaviours you're not willing to tolerate or concessions you're unwilling to make. Here are some simple tips for making sure you're clear about your walk-away point the next time you go to the negotiating table.

- If you're negotiating a deal which involves money, write down the price at which the deal will no longer be profitable. This is the point at which you will walk away from the negotiation
- If you're doing a less concrete negotiation, list the behaviours you're not prepare to tolerate or the alternative you're not willing to accept in the negotiation
- Write down your walk-away point and make sure you keep it clearly in front of you during the negotiation

If you tend to give too much away during negotiations—its particularly important that you keep your walk-away point in sight during negotiations. Remember you have the right to say 'no' to a deal.

### Know what you will and won't concede

A concession is something you give in return for receiving something back from your negotiating partner. Many women have a habit of giving too much away and forgetting to ask for concessions in return. So always use the phrase, 'If you give me this, I will give you that' when exchanging concessions. It also helps

to prepare possible concessions in advance. Here are three tips for getting the concession exchange process right:

1. List three or four giveaways you can offer to your negotiating partner
2. Write down three or four things you will request in return
3. Brainstorm three questions you can use to ask your partner to give you a concession

Keep your list of concessions in front of you throughout your negotiation. Remember that negotiation is about exchanging concessions, not just giving them away.

## Remember the phrase ‘if you do this, I will do that’

As you’ve already seen, its important to ask for something in return every time you offer a concession. Otherwise the negotiation becomes lopsided and you’ll walk away with an unfair deal. So memorise this important phrase and try it out in situations which are low stakes conversations. You need to feel comfortable and confident using the phrase, ‘If you do this, I will do that’.

## Prime your mind with a mental rehearsal

Confident negotiators have clear action plans. To develop your action plan, mentally walk through what a successful negotiation will look, sound and feel like from your perspective. Mentally rehearse two versions of the negotiation scenario. One is your ideal scenario, where everything happens in exactly the way you want it to. The second, perhaps more important rehearsal, is encountering blocks or barriers to success and confidently overcoming them. Its important that you mentally rehearse overcoming barriers so you will know what to do if they happen in real life. Here are the most common dirty tactics you might encounter during the negotiation. You should create a mental rehearsal process for dealing with each of them.

- Refusal to exchange concessions
- Aggressive or manipulative dirty tactics
- Inability to generate viable options or win-win solutions
- An impasse where it seems that you just can’t move forward

There are solutions to all these difficult situations. With a bit of mental rehearsal, you will be able to handle them competently and confidently. If you need more tips on how to be a successful negotiator as a professional woman, come along to my *Negotiation Skills for Women* workshop. I look forward to seeing you there.

## About the author of this tip sheet

This article is brought to you 'the glass ceiling smasher', Eleanor Shakiba. Eleanor specialises in helping women in high intellect fields - such as academia, education, engineering, finance, project management and health - to move beyond three common barriers to women's success. Eleanor's qualifications include degrees and diplomas in Social Anthropology, Applied Psychology, Adult Education and Neuro Linguistic Programming.

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