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Women at Work: Avoid 'win-lose' thinking while negotiating

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The skill of negotiating is not limited to politics or business. We do it all the time. It is as constant as breathing. Try these specific techniques to create collaboration and outcomes where everybody wins.

Unlike breathing, we must practice in order to improve our negotiating powers.

One of the keys to improvement is to avoid "win-lose" thinking. Here are some tips to hone your skills:

Missed expectations: Conflict is a result of missed expectations. The antidote for that is clarity. The key is to be very clear from the start. Summarize action items and be sure to ask questions such as "what exactly does 'better performance' look like?" Or, "what do you mean by early to work?"

Check your intentions: When starting a conversation, check what your honest intention is. If you want to "shame or blame" the other person, then stop right there. Your comments will sound like criticism. If your intention is to improve the outcome, your words will naturally convey a desire to assist.

Curiosity versus certainty: Too often we approach the world with certainty. When we are certain of the "right" outcome, we will miss opportunities to be creative and will fail to foster goodwill. Practice being open and curious.

Valued, respected and heard: When you're done with a conversation, reflect on what you could have done differently. Create your own V-R-H meter. Did you feel valued and respected? More importantly, how did the other person feel?

Effective negotiation begins with an attitude that is reflective and empathetic. One basic principle in negotiation is not negotiable: Beyond "win-win," you must have a core belief that you are connected to the other person and that you care about his or her well-being as much as your own.

Mann is a mediator in private practice. For more, go to: www.bjmediationservices.com.

This column is written by members of the Rochester Women's Network (www.rwn.org), which seeks to help women connect, grow and succeed.
