

How to have a Win-Win Conversation

Whether you are negotiating with your boss for a salary rise, engaging in a heated family Christmas dinner debate, dealing with a client, or having a one-on-one dialogue with a friend, conversations can often become heated, tense, argumentative, and over-subjective. This can lead to arguments, stress, disagreements, and can even damage relationships.

No one likes to admit defeat, and no one wants to walk away from a conversation feeling as if they purposefully had to back down because they lacked the confidence to support their own opinions. However, nobody wants to walk away feeling triumphant about putting the other party down either .

What is a “Win-Win” Conversation?

Having a “win-win” conversation is all about balance and integrity.

It means being able to:

- articulate your thoughts
- communicate your ideas clearly
- present yourself with confidence
- remain objective
- avoid allowing emotions direct the flow of conversation
- negotiate rationally

Benefits of a Win-Win Conversation

1. The final solution is mutually beneficial. Both parties leave feeling positive and satisfied.
2. Professionalism and good relationships remain intact.
3. Stress and conflicting emotions are avoided.
4. You improve your communication skills.
5. You allow yourself to remain open-minded to different perspectives, and possibly even learn new things.

How to Have a Win-Win Conversation

All of the benefits of a win-win conversation can be achieved without compromising on your own beliefs and point of view.

Be Objective

While it is natural to be instinctively aware of your own standpoint towards the conversation topic in question, it takes demonstrable skill to justify yourself objectively. You need to be prepared to present facts to back your argument. It's not just about proving yourself right and the other party wrong, however - you need to be able to use these facts in a persuasive, illustrative, and informative way.

Instead of just setting your agenda out on the table in a persistent manner, try to use objective criteria to frame your side of the conversation, and give your argument context and relevance. Being objective also lends legitimacy to your position, which can in turn boost your confidence and help guide the conversation to an informed win-win conclusion.

Consider the Other Point of View

A crucial element of a successful win-win conversation is the ability to consider the other party's point of view. This doesn't mean you have to agree with everything they say - or anything at all, for that matter. However, empathy is an important life skill which can result in more effective communication.

Allow for a moment to listen to the other side of the conversation - not only will this provide you with more context upon which to base your own response, but it will to a certain extent pacify the other speaker. Once they realise that you aren't intent on shouting them down, and are prepared to listen and allow them to voice their opinion, they will be more inclined to reciprocate the gesture. Developing mutual respect early on is essential for any win-win conversation.

Make a Connection

An important part of having an open-mind and being flexible in your thinking, is establishing some sort of common ground with the other party.

The reality is that we often misconstrue or misunderstand our opponent's position, while people's positions are rarely as opposed as they may first appear. It is tempting to

dive straight in and make assumptions, but as a win-win conversation relies on mutual satisfaction, even if both sides' views are passionately opposed, it is important to make a connection on some point. Even if it's only to maintain civilised interaction! This also helps to build trust, and gets the conversation rolling in a constructive direction.

Separate from Emotions

Separating from your personal emotions towards the topic in question goes hand-in-hand with the ability to back your arguments objectively. Emotional involvement will rarely help to illustrate or give credence to your point of view, and could even undermine your position. It also has a negative effect on your confidence and composure levels, as making an emotionally charged argument can lead to stress and tension - the very opposite ingredients needed for a successful win-win conversation.

Use Your BATNA

BATNA stands for: Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. This approach is sometimes needed as a fallback if your negotiation strategy or argumentative approach doesn't appear to be going down the right path. Although compromise is sometimes frowned upon, in the context of a win-win conversation, adhering to BATNA principles can nevertheless still allow you to leave the conversation feeling satisfied and accomplished.

If it is clear that your conversation isn't going to achieve the end which you initially desired, BATNA allows you to consider alternative routes and conclusions. Sometimes this means thinking on your feet, which is always a positive skill to develop, and one which often proves to be the secret missing element to achieving a win-win conversation.

Other Win-Win Conversation Techniques

Use Your Negotiation Skills: Negotiating skills are vital to ensuring a successful conversation. Be professional, rational, and accommodating, while remaining firm and confident in your propositions and goals.

Think Gamesmanship, not Brinkmanship: The last thing you want to do is alienate your opponent with aggressive dialogue and a negative attitude. While gamesmanship does involve testing the limits slightly, it doesn't mean veering into brinkmanship, which only aims to sabotage the other party.

Remain Calm: Composure is key to every win-win conversation! It benefits both party's positions, keeps you mentally sane, and paves the way for a smooth win-win conversation.

If you're still reeling at the thoughts of how to start incorporating these techniques into your negotiations and conversations (or even just your everyday communications), [high-performance coaching sessions](#) can help you reach this level, and realise your own personalized, tailored goals.