

Foreword by Roger Fisher

“These ideas helped us accomplish more in one year of negotiating than in ten years of warfare.”

**Roberto Canus,
former FMLN guerrilla leader, El Salvador**

During the civil war in El Salvador I had the unusual opportunity of conducting negotiation workshops for both the Government's negotiating team in the Presidential Palace in San Salvador and for negotiators who would represent the guerrillas, the FMLN. When I first met one of these guerrilla leaders at a hide-out in Nicaragua he laughed with amusement at the thought that his political and social goals might be better pursued through negotiation than through violence. Yet he was a quick learner. He soon appreciated the power of establishing good communication and an effective working relationship with those on the other side, of understanding their interests, of generating options that might reconcile the interests of both sides better than would continued violence, and of using precedents and other objective standards which the other side found more persuasive than unilateral demands.

Again, in South Africa, colleagues and I were invited to conduct negotiation workshops for both the all-white cabinet of the apartheid Government and for Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress. In both countries, leaders learned that negotiation was not a sign of weakness but rather of self-confidence. To negotiate was not to give in, but rather to pursue one's ends by means more effective than violence.

Symptoms. Too often in our schools the relationships among students, between students and teachers, and between students and parents are characterized by confrontation. Students feel dominated, frustrated, and uncertain about what to do. Some join gangs and engage in violence. Others give up, cut classes or drop out completely. Teachers often have to choose among equally unattractive options. Trying to bulldoze into better behavior proves ineffective. Courses in peace studies or conflict resolution are often heard by students as asking them to abandon their goals, to accept frustration, and to “please be nice.”

Teachers and many others have worked hard to produce in-school materials that teach students how to resolve their differences without violence. Excellent courses in peer mediation have enabled quite a few students to become skilled in helping fellow students to settle playground disputes peacefully. Despite such excellent work, the climate in our schools tends to remain one of confrontation and potential violence. Why?

Diagnosis. Students tend to blame teachers: “Grown-ups don’t understand us.” “They don’t listen.” “They reject new ideas.” “If I try to be ‘nice,’ I am treated as a whimp and get no respect from students or from teachers.”

Teachers tend to blame students — or their families or television. Teachers, too, see themselves as having to choose between being “soft” or being “tough” in circumstances where neither strategy works. A teacher who is gentle with adolescents is likely to get run over. Violence prevention programs by their very definition are negative. And a teacher who tries to crack down on students is likely to meet stubborn resistance if not open rebellion.

Teachers familiar with the negotiation approach suggested since 1981 in *Getting to YES* may recognize the possibility of a “third way” — something that is neither soft nor hard — and yet find that there are few materials available to help them teach such an approach to their students.

Looking forward. Among the many explanations for confrontation and violence in our schools, there appear to be three about which something can be done. These diagnoses, and a constructive approach for dealing with each of them, are:

DIAGNOSES	A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH
<p>1. Most students and teachers see no choice except to be soft or hard -- to give in or to use violence.</p> <p>2. Simple “anti-violence” is a negative strategy which offers students nothing.</p> <p>3. Most schools have no curricular materials to help teachers and students learn together how to negotiate effectively.</p>	<p>1. Teach students and teachers how to negotiate.</p> <p>2. Empower students to get what they want more effectively through negotiation than through violence.</p> <p>3. Offer schools a well-crafted set of tried and tested materials for teaching negotiation skills.</p>

The materials in this book are based on the same ideas that we have used in teaching lawyers and labor leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats, generals and students, around the world and here at Harvard. These materials have been developed, tried and adapted in real schools with real students. The exercises work. Fairly quickly, students learn that they can be

more effective in negotiating with adults than in confronting them and that they can be more effective in asserting their own interests when they are empathetic to the interests of others. They also learn that an outcome that meets the legitimate interests of others as well as their own is likely to be more valuable and more durable than any one-sided short-term "victory."

As a teacher myself, I know how tempting it is simply to tell our students how to behave and what to do. Too often such edicts fail. If we want our students to negotiate with adults, we have to learn to negotiate with them. This means to sit side-by-side, to listen, to understand, to acknowledge their interests as well as our own. It means modeling the behavior that we would like them to adopt.

The materials in this volume are not a set of lectures to be read by students. Rather they are a set of activities in which students — and teachers — can jointly engage and from which they can jointly learn how to be more effective in pursuing their shared and differing interests. I have every confidence that you who use these materials will not only teach a lot, you will also learn a lot. Further, you will enjoy the process. If so -- or if not -- please let me know.

Roger Fisher
Director, Harvard Negotiation Project
Williston Professor of Law, Emeritus