

# Some Like It Hot: Teaching Strategies for Managing Tactical Versus Genuine Anger in Negotiations

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## Abstract

A critically important skill in any negotiation is the ability to manage the emotions that are inevitably evoked by conflict. Anger is one of the most widely studied emotions that occur in negotiation. The purpose of this article is to introduce strategies for managing tactical and genuine anger in negotiations. The difference between tactical and genuine anger is discussed along with different strategies for managing each of these types of anger. The article concludes with advice for instructors to help negotiation students acquire experience in managing both their own and the other party's anger.

Emotions are an inevitable aspect of social interaction where parties are interdependent but have interests that conflict (Allred, 1999). Anger can provide important strategic information (e.g., status, strength, and limits) which in turn may influence the other party's behavior and the outcome (Van Kleef, in press; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, 2004b). This article reviews the research on tactical and genuine anger in negotiations, and discusses different strategies suggested by scholars and commentators to manage each of these types of anger. The article concludes with advice for instructors to help negotiation students acquire experience in managing both their own and the other party's anger.

## Anger in Negotiation

Anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage (Van den Bos, 2006). Anger has a negative valence, and tends to be other-directed (Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997). In negotiations, anger may be genuine—a reaction to the perceived violation of some standard of socially acceptable behavior (Averill, 1982). It can be provoked by a range of behaviors that have in common the effect of making people feel unfairly treated or socially disrespected (Adler,

Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998). Alternatively, anger may be tactical—feigned for the purpose of gaining leverage or equalizing power (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005), or to intimidate and unhinge the other side for immediate advantage (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson, 2006; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006). It is not always easy to determine whether anger is tactical or feigned, and the research on anger focuses on the conditions under which anger generates concessions versus reciprocity, not on the motive underlying the anger. In the next section, the theory and literature identifying the effectiveness of anger to elicit concessions is reviewed. In the subsequent section on managing anger, discussion returns to the motive underlying anger and whether it is tactical or feigned.

## Effectiveness of Anger in Negotiation

The effects of anger in negotiations are not straightforward. Some studies show that negotiators who are the recipients of anger become more conciliatory, and make lower demands and larger concessions than those who do not encounter anger (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b). Evidence also suggests that negotiators who are the recipients of anger become angry themselves, refuse to make concessions, and willingly go to impasse (Friedman et al., 2004).

Van Kleef's (in press) model of "Emotions as Social Information" (EASI) helps to reconcile these divergent findings. Van Kleef proposes that anger may exert influence in negotiation by two distinct paths, an informational-strategic path and an affective-relational path. From the informational-strategic perspective, the research shows that anger is more likely to elicit concessions under four conditions: (a) when the recipient is highly motivated to process information, thereby analyzing the risks of the other person remaining angry, (b) when the recipient is in a low power position and motivated to think about the implications of the angry party's emotions on the target's own goal attainment, (c) when the recipient is not under time pressure, and (d) when the recipient perceives the anger is justified. For original research see Friedman et al., 2004; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b; and Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni et al., 2006. Negotiators who analyze the other party's anger and either conclude that it is legitimate or that it might jeopardize reaching an agreement seem to infer that their own goals are too high and that they must make concessions to prevent the impasse (Frank, 1988; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Status and power tend to be conferred to a person who expresses anger (Tiedens, 2001). In negotiations, this may lead to a conclusion that the angry person knows something that the recipient of the anger does not.

This preceding research suggests that expressions of anger may stimulate the recipient to process the anger, find it legitimate, and make concessions to avoid impasse—Van Kleef's informational-strategic path of influence. However, Lewicki, Saunders, and Barry (2006) suggest that expressions of anger in negotiations may so surprise and disconcert the recipient that concessions are made as an almost unthinking affective-emotional response. When a person violates expectations during a social interaction, the resulting

anxiety and uncertainty divert cognitive and attentional resources from the social interaction toward internal demands associated with emotional regulation and stress management (Mendes, Blascovich, Hunter, Lickel, & Jost, 2007). This subsequently leads to decrements in task performance and in the engagement of negative and defeat-related behaviors. Surprise moves in a negotiation can create uncertainty, which can be strategically useful in changing the very nature of the interaction (Stuart, 2004).

Further theorizing along these lines suggests that negotiators have a shared script or schema (a sequence of expected actions) to guide behavior in a negotiation (O'Connor & Adams, 1999) or an escalatory situation (Mikolic, Parker, & Pruitt, 1997) and that certain actions taken by the other party may violate these expectations. For example, in a deal-making negotiation context, the parties come to the table optimistic about their future relationship (Brett, 2007) and a sudden display of anger may be a surprise.

However, empirical studies supporting the conclusion that anger is likely to elicit reciprocal anger and no concessions generally infer an affective-relational response to anger. This may occur, for instance, when the recipient of anger is in a stronger position than the perpetrator (Friedman et al., 2004), the recipient is not highly motivated to analyze the risks of the other person remaining angry, and/or deems the anger of the perpetrator as inappropriate (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; see also Kopelman et al., 2006). Negotiators under time pressure or with a high need for closure may be unable or unwilling to adjust to the other's anger strategy and simply press on with their own strategy, ignoring the anger (Van Kleef et al., 2004b). Two studies of the impact of negative emotions on negotiations found that even directive language reduced the likelihood of settlement. One study using the Friedman et al. database showed that the likelihood of settlement was lowered when the negotiator expressed negative emotions that attacked face or made commands (Brett et al., 2007). In another study, directive language increased recipients' anger and decreased their belief that a settlement was likely (Schroth, Bain-Chekal, & Caldwell, 2005).

Whether or not anger will elicit concessions from a recipient is fraught with conditions. However, these conditions do not seem to affect other responses to anger. For example, angry people may be perceived as competent, strong, dominant, and smart (Tiedens, 2001), but they may also be perceived to be cold, unfriendly, and disreputable (Clark et al., 1996; Gallois, 1993; Labbott, Martin, Eason, & Berkey, 1991; Tiedens, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). To avoid being taken advantage of, negotiators who are on the receiving end of anger exhibit behaviors such as sharing little information and reluctantly engaging in two-way communication; all reduce the likelihood of achieving an integrative agreement (Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Recipients of anger are less satisfied with the negotiation process and outcome and are less willing to engage in future interactions with the angry party than when they are not exposed to anger (Allred et al., 1997; Kopelman et al., 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). These are all short-term immediate responses to anger that do not seem to be contingent. What is lacking from a research perspective is knowledge about the long-term impact of having a reputation as an angry negotiator. Do others avoid negotiating with such people? Do they act angry preemptively? Does a reputation for using anger in negotiation rule out negotiating integrative agreements? Recent research on reputation

(Anderson & Shirako, 2007) suggests that anger and reputation is a fruitful area for future studies.

## Recognizing Genuine Versus Tactical Anger

A negotiator who is the recipient of anger does not want to make concessions that reinforce the other for using anger as a strategy or to use tactics that reciprocate the anger and thereby risk reaching an impasse. In short, negotiators need to know how to manage anger and develop a strategic response. In order to develop a strategic response it is necessary to understand whether the anger is tactical or genuine.

Researchers can distinguish conceptually between tactical and genuine anger, but negotiators without contextual cues are not very accurate in detecting whether the other party's anger is genuine or tactical, responding as if the anger was genuine (Van Kleef et al., 2004b). There are a few contextual cues that negotiators may use to help determine whether the anger they are receiving is genuine or tactical. One indication is the reputation of the negotiator. Is this a person who commonly uses anger as an intimidation or power tactic? The prudent negotiator will research the other party prior to negotiating to anticipate the attitudes and behaviors that the party may use at the negotiation table (Tinsley, O'Connor, & Sullivan, 2002).

Two more considerations are whether a deal or dispute is being negotiated (Brett, 2007) and the stage during the negotiation when the anger is being expressed (Lytle, Brett, & Shapiro, 1999). Negotiators approach deal-making with optimism. If they have planned properly, they should be negotiating to create value with their partner (Brett, 2007). On the other hand, negotiators are likely to approach dispute resolution with pessimism, trying to minimize costs (Brett, 2007) after having their claim rejected (Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1981). Anger, then, can be expected at the outset of dispute resolution negotiations, but not deal-making ones. Thus, genuine anger may occur in the very early stages of dispute resolution negotiations because face has been lost due to the rejection of the claim. In deal-making negotiations, genuine anger may emerge in the middle or later stages of the negotiation as a reaction to emerging conflict (Donohue & Taylor, 2007; Lewicki et al., 2006; O'Connor & Adams, 1999) or disillusionment over the other party's behavior (Daly, 1991). Anger may also emerge after negotiators feel their concerns and arguments are not being respected or adequately addressed by the other party (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Another way to determine whether anger is genuine or tactical is to test it. Genuine anger should subside when venting is allowed, when breaks are taken, or when the concerns of the angry negotiator are acknowledged (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Ury, 1993). Negotiators using tactical anger to influence the other party to make concessions may continue the emotional assault regardless of these events. If the recipient makes concessions in response to the perpetrator's anger, the assault is likely to continue because concessions only serve to reinforce the anger (Adler et al., 1998; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006). Tactical anger cannot be thwarted until the perpetrators recognize that their anger is not generating concessions and their strategy needs to be adjusted (Van Kleef, in press; Van Kleef et al., 2004a).

## Effective Ways to Manage Anger

The power of tactical anger appears to lie in the reactions of the recipients. As a result, recipients need to know how to avoid surrendering power to the perpetrator in the face of an anger attack. There are several options, all of which involve recipients managing their own emotional responses. In this section four approaches are discussed that recipients may use to manage an anger attack. Although all four may work in either tactical or genuine anger situations, the first two, labeling the anger and matching and de-escalating, may be particularly useful when the anger is tactical. The second two, controlling the process and building a relationship, may be particularly useful when the anger is genuine.

### Labeling Anger

To retain power when facing an angry negotiator, it is important to recognize the anger as a tactic. Labeling the tactic as ineffective can then neutralize it and help to refocus the negotiation (Lytle et al., 1999). By labeling the anger tactic as inhibiting conflict resolution or not promoting good will, the recipients share their interpretation of the other party's behavior. If the anger is truly tactical it is hard to disagree with such an interpretation, and the parties may leave the anger behind and move the negotiation discussion forward. Alternatively, the recipient of an angry threat may label the threat as not credible, neutralizing its effect (Lytle et al., 1999). In general, the credibility and power of the instigator will be lost if the anger is identified as a tactic of intimidation and the "angry" negotiator is called out on the tactic (Lytle et al., 1999).

### Matching With Firmness and De-Escalating

To equalize power with the perpetrator, research suggests using a strategy that matches the power of the expressed anger, before engaging in a de-escalatory move to continue progress in the negotiation. Lytle et al. (1999) found a combination power-interest strategy was effective in countering a power approach. Negotiators prevented a conflict spiral and made progress toward resolution when they first reciprocated a rights or power-based communication, and then changed the focus by posing an interests-based question or offering a proposal for settlement. The researchers suggest that this combined response gives the other party a choice of what to reciprocate; reciprocated responses tended to be more noncontentious communication. Further evidence of the effectiveness of the matching strategy is in Brett et al.'s (2007) study of online disputes. In that study, negotiators who responded in a firm manner (expressing importance of the dispute and a message of determination) to an angry claimant had a better chance of resolving the dispute than those who did not respond firmly or those who responded angrily. A respondent who is firm has a better chance of turning the negotiation in a positive direction to resolve the dispute than one who reciprocates anger.

One method to communicate firmness is through nonverbal behavior. Negotiators can create an impression of power nonverbally, for example, by the intensity of their voice or posture—see Hall, Coats, and Smith LeBeau (2005) for a full list of nonverbal

behaviors that increase perceived and actual vertical status. There are many opportunities for research on how these nonverbal behaviors impact the negotiation interaction and work to manage anger. There also is the question of whether negotiators can be trained to utilize nonverbal power cues to increase their effectiveness in a negotiation situation where a display of power is important for perceptions of strength.

Negotiators can jeopardize the deal outcome by losing control over their emotions and becoming genuinely angry, especially in response to tactical anger. However, responding in a manner that shows that you, the recipient of the anger attack, can be just as powerful or angry without being genuinely angry is a key to matching the power. Once the power is matched, a de-escalation move is vital. Negotiators do not have to yell back to manage tactical anger, but may need to exert powerful nonverbal behaviors to show that they have the capacity for using power if necessary. If the response does not rise to the same level of strength as the negotiator who uses the anger tactic, power may not be perceived to be matched and the destructive behavior will continue, thwarting the opportunity for de-escalation and the beginning of collaborative discussion.

### **Control the Process (Strategic Breaks)**

Calling for a break may disrupt the negative intensity and agenda of the negotiator who uses anger as a tactic. The break may also allow the recipient of the anger to regain mental balance (Ury, 1993) and plan a strategic response given the information collected from the angry outburst (Van Kleef et al., 2004a). An interruption in a negative negotiation process can be a positive turning point to increase trust and refocus the negotiation on searching for joint gain (Olekalns & Smith, 2005). To maintain perceived power when using this strategy, the recipient may want to call for a break with vocal intensity, demonstrating resolve, so it does not appear to be a concession (Lytle et al., 1999). A key aspect of utilizing a break is to allow face saving for the angry party (see Brett et al., 2007). For example, the recipient of anger can request a break by suggesting that both sides (not just the angry one) need time to re-think the issues before coming back to the table at a specific designated time. This break allows each side to re-think its strategy and also enables the recipient to regain control of emotions that may have started to flare because of the other side's behavior (Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Research could consider the following questions on when breaks are a useful response to genuine and tactical anger: Should a break occur immediately after the anger outburst or after other responses have failed? Should a break be initiated with firmness as suggested by the readings or as a face-saving option, or both? How much of a beneficial effect does taking a break have? Are there instances where taking a break can escalate anger and have a negative impact? See Exhibit A for a practical example of combining the above strategies to manage anger in a negotiation.

### **Communicate and Build a Relationship**

When a negotiator feels genuinely attacked, Ury (1993) suggests it is important not to yield to the natural reaction of striking back, giving in, or walking away. None of

these natural reactions will help to resolve the conflict. Instead, the negotiator can refocus the angry party on interests by demonstrating an understanding of their concerns without agreeing with their arguments (i.e., Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Ury, 1993). This is a process of face saving (Brett et al., 2007). Reframing the situation from one of anger and frustration to one of respectful problem solving by engaging the angry party to contribute to the process can lead to a more collaborative negotiation (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Ury, 1993). Loss of face can also be avoided by not using angry or blaming language when reframing the situation (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Schroth et al., 2005).

Parties tend to cycle between interests, rights, and power-based approaches when negotiating, and are most likely to reciprocate a similar response, although reciprocity of interests is more frequent than reciprocity of rights or power-based communications (Lytle et al., 1999). A focus on a rights or power-based approach to try to determine how to resolve the dispute is more likely to lead to a distributive agreement and in some cases, revenge and escalation (Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1993). Evidence from Lytle et al. (1999), although not directly focused on anger, strongly suggests that a primary focus on interests has the greatest potential for resolving the underlying causes of a dispute and that a power-based focus should be used only when the interests-based negotiation strategies are exhausted.

In summary, research suggests that when confronted by genuine anger, allow the other party to vent, but show respect by listening carefully to their concerns and ask them questions if necessary. When the other side is done venting, acknowledge their arguments, address their anger, and most important—do not ignore it. If the other side is truly angry, acknowledging their grievances should lead to some immediate relief from the verbal assault and a change in the angry party's tone of voice and intensity. It may even elicit a more relaxed posture. Returning to normal integrative skills of asking questions and sharing information can then lead to progress in the negotiation process. However, if anger is used as a tactic, the instigator may continue to attack and perhaps become angrier at the recipient's perceived unresponsiveness to the tactic. Power-matching tactics or calling out the behavior would be a viable alternative before attempting to disarm the perpetrator further with integrative strategies. It is dangerous to assume that the initial outburst of anger is a tactic because a power-matching strategy for a genuinely angry person may escalate the situation so that the parties resort to positional bargaining with little information sharing and a greater likelihood of impasse (Lytle et al., 1999).

## Ineffective Ways to Manage Anger

Some strategies that negotiators use in response to anger are probably not effective, especially in certain circumstances. These strategies may include appeasing the other party, failing to control one's own emotional response (reciprocating), or ignoring the anger. There are theoretical reasons for thinking that these strategies may be ineffective in turning off the other party's anger. Although there is some empirical research on these strategies, this area should be a productive area for future research.

## **Appeasing the Other Party**

Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead (2006) found that expressions of guilt and regret (appeasement) may engender a positive impression, but may also lead the other party to stand firm and resist concession making. They suggest that the expression of guilt (and to a lesser degree regret) informs the other party that too much was taken and that the offender is willing to compensate for this. Interaction partners anticipating compensation from the party that expresses guilt usually make high demands and small concessions. This research also suggests that it is ineffective to manage anger by trying to appease or accommodate the other party. Furthermore, appeasement would appear to reinforce the bad behavior (Lewicki et al., 2006). Why should the other side stop their “angry” act if it appears to be working? Giving in also may lead to a linkage effect where other people such as potential customers or suppliers will hear that acting angry yields rewards, promoting copycat behavior.

Although there is evidence that appeasement can create room for exploitation, evidence also suggests that appeasement enhances the quality of the interpersonal relationship (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006). Guilt serves various relationship-enhancing functions, including motivating people to treat partners well and to avoid transgressions, rectifying inequities, and enabling less powerful partners to get their way (Baumeister et al., 1994). Guilt also may benefit the relationship by improving perspective taking and empathy (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). When individuals want to reestablish the social bond after social relationships have been threatened, appeasement-related, submissive, and affiliative behaviors may reduce aggression and help to restore relations (Keltner & Buswell, 1997).

Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead (2006), however, suggest that negotiators may be motivated to express guilt or regret strategically to make a good impression and to induce or maintain a positive interpersonal relationship. However, this action would be at the expense of their own personal negotiation outcomes by raising the demands and reducing the concessions made by the recipient. Appeasement may be a viable option if rebuilding the relationship is of greater concern than the balance of the short-term negotiated outcome.

## **Failing to Control Emotions and Reciprocating Anger**

Failing to control emotions and reciprocating anger can escalate the situation and hinder a settlement (Friedman et al., 2004). It also can damage the relationship (Kopelman et al., 2006). Although reciprocating a display of anger can convey strength (see power matching), it is a dangerous tactic if the recipients are unable to control their own genuine anger and emotions, and subsequently get drawn into a conflict spiral (Lytle et al., 1999). Van Kleef and Côté (2007) found that only high-powered negotiators may benefit from the reciprocation of anger against a low-powered instigator and then only if the instigator’s anger is viewed as inappropriate. These researchers suggest that low-powered recipients of anger must seek strategies other than acting angry themselves to acquire power. Negotiators who reciprocate anger must be careful



to determine when it may be beneficial and, more importantly, not lose control of their genuine emotions. Truly becoming angry and getting caught up in a conflict spiral can result in losing sight of one's own goals and result in impasse. See Exhibit B for advice on managing emotions.

### **Ignoring the Anger**

Several authors in their scholarly writings on negotiating with difficult people have cautioned that ignoring the angry or inappropriate behavior of the other party may not alleviate the assault or equalize any perceived power imbalance in the situation (Adler et al., 1998; Lewicki et al., 2006; Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007; Ury, 1993). While this advice seems primarily based on personal experience, not empirical research, the danger seems real. Anger that elicits no noticeable response from the other side (i.e., silence signals submission, guilt, or fear) may cause the perpetrator to misjudge and assume that the anger tactic is working. This inference may lead the perpetrator to expect concessions from the other side (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006) and provides no compelling reason for the perpetrator to try a different and perhaps more productive approach (Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, et al., 2006).

Some empirical evidence suggests there are situations where ignoring anger would not have an ill effect. Friedman et al. (2004) found there was no ill effect when the recipient of anger had a weak, vulnerable position and ignored the anger of the perpetrator. Similarly, Van Kleef and Côté (2007) found that if the perpetrator had a low (vs. high) power position and that their anger displayed was deemed appropriate, then the recipient ignoring the anger had no ill effect. Both studies support the argument that the anger recipient's power is an important moderating factor for responding effectively to tactical anger. The contrast between the prescriptive authors' advice and these studies could be due to differences in context, dispute resolution versus deal-making negotiation, and the medium of communication (e.g., email vs. face to face). More research is needed to illuminate the reasons for these different observations and to clarify when it is best to ignore or address anger.

## **Teaching Students to Manage Tactical Versus Genuine Anger in Negotiations**

Negotiators resolving ongoing, major disputes are likely to come to the table genuinely angry because of past interactions. One has made a claim, the other has rejected it, and negotiators may become angry at the perceived recalcitrance of the other party. In classrooms where negotiations are taught, students experience little of either tactical or genuine anger. However, to teach students to learn to manage anger, they need practical experience in confronting it. Instructors must make conflict happen in the classroom in a manner that is safe and controlled, but also provides a valid learning experience. There are basically two ways of doing so—coach the claimant in a dispute simulation to be angry or coach a party, such as a reluctant seller in a corporate takeover, to react angrily to an offer and respond by making an extreme offer.

## Coaching Students in Tactical Anger

It is helpful to understand the source of anger in a negotiation in order to induce angry emotions in a classroom. In order to identify what makes a person angry in a negotiation, I collected data from 118 undergraduate students enrolled in a negotiation course at the University of California, Berkeley. The students were asked to recall a negotiation in which they felt anger and what behaviors triggered that anger. The behaviors in order of greatest impact on triggering anger are listed below:

- Not acknowledging, listening, or addressing the other party's comments;
- Verbal attacks by words and tone of voice;
- Nonverbal (e.g., eyes rolling, not looking at the other negotiator);
- Interrupting/talking over the person;
- Rude or impolite language irritators;
- Pointing out where the other is wrong/put down (belittling);
- Self-aggrandizement;
- Telling what to do/selling/not consulting; and
- Not participating/silence/dropping out.

These behaviors would appear mostly to induce low interactional justice by not showing adequate sensitivity toward the other party, such as not treating them with dignity and respect. These have the effect of hindering the negotiation process, which may also violate standards of procedural justice. Mere violations of standards of fair treatment or fair procedure can evoke anger toward the other party and retaliatory behavior, regardless of the favorability of an outcome (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). To evoke emotions in the classroom, the instructor can coach students to use anger-provoking behaviors when negotiating. The impact of anger can be augmented by pairing these anger provoking behaviors with excessive demands (Daly, 1991), but can be diminished if accompanied by a reasonable offer or concession (Van Kleef et al., 2004a). A denial of responsibility for any actions that led up to the conflict situation or a lack of accountability for attempting to remedy the situation can lead to even more intense anger (Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993).

Reactions of recipients to anger-inducing tactics showed that anger was indeed aroused, but additional emotions such as fear (e.g., about the ability to reach an outcome), anxiety (e.g., about continuing the "uncomfortable" interaction), and frustration (e.g., about the other party not being cooperative) were also likely (Schroth et al., 2005). These other emotions may also affect the quality of the negotiation interaction and outcome. Fear often leads to compliance (Averill, 1982), while anxiety and frustration reduce information sharing and integrative opportunities (Van Kleef et al., 2004a).

## Exercises for Teaching About the Impact of Anger in Negotiations

Several exercises can be used to demonstrate the impact of anger in a negotiation. These include Myti-Pet (Schroth, Corniola, & Voit, 2008), Chestnut Drive (Gordon & Patton,

2008), Summer Interns (Lewicki, Sheppard, Tinsley, & Brett, 2008), and Paradise Project (Brett, Karambayya, Tinsley, & Lytle, 2008).<sup>1</sup> These exercises are set in a dispute resolution context where the parties have a variety of different reasons to be angry with each other. In Myti-Pet, one side is coached using the anger-inducing behaviors to surprise the other side by acting angry in the first 10 min of the negotiation. They then are instructed to try to de-escalate the situation after a specified amount of time, unless the other party makes concessions. In that case, the perpetrator should continue the anger behavior until it no longer garners benefits. In Chestnut Drive, one party is coached to initially disrupt the other team so that the other side will most likely reciprocate with anger. That negotiating posture will be altered to a more interests-based approach only if the other negotiators make credible threats and there is no other way to dissuade them from their course of action, including ignoring or countering their threats. Although Summer Interns and Paradise Project do not have specific anger instructions, both exercises are written so that the parties have complaints and anger toward the other side. The instructor may elect to give one side tactical anger instructions to heighten the emotion and conflict.

Tactical anger instructions can be used with any exercise that involves a dispute between the parties. However, it is recommended to give only one side anger instructions so that the other does not initially recognize the coaching and will hopefully experience genuine emotions. Also, it is imperative that students do not tell the other party until after the negotiation is over that they had been coached to act angry. It is important that students feel psychologically safe in the classroom so there are limits to what anger behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. Appendix A has an example of tactical anger instructions that help students feel comfortable about how and why they were asked to implement the tactic. These instructions are reproduced from the Myti-Pet Exercise based on research of anger-inducing language and behaviors, and were tested by the author to have a safe but effective impact.

Another area for further exercise development would be the creation of a deal-making negotiation where anger instructions can be incorporated to simulate tactical anger. It is most likely that the anger instructions would have to be a variation of those used in a deal-making dispute so that the anger would be directed at the unacceptable quality of the offer. The anger instructions may be similar to those used by Van Kleef et al. (2004a, 2004b) in their studies of the effects of anger in a deal-making context. Developing and testing such an exercise may provide additional support for the findings of Van Kleef et al. and would enhance students' ability to recognize tactical anger being utilized in a deal-making versus conflict-resolution situation.

There is a 16-min video, about a Canadian labor leader named Buzz Hargrove, available from the Harvard Business School (\$75), that can be used to illustrate management of anger in a negotiation. The video comes with a case study that includes role play instructions and teaching notes. The video has several good examples of the management of genuine anger. Students can discuss why certain tactics work and how they would

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<sup>1</sup>The exercises are available through the Dispute Resolution Research Center, Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University.

naturally and ideally act if they were in a similar situation. Although there is currently no other case available illustrating the management of anger in a negotiation, there is an excellent real world example, *Arcelor-Mittal*, featured in Brett's (2007) edition of *Negotiating Globally*. Brett describes the tactical use of anger by the reluctant seller in a hostile take-over attempt and this example can be used as a basis for discussion of the impact and management of tactical anger in a negotiation. When Mittal made the first unsolicited bid for Arcelor, the Arcelor CEO rebuffed the offer in a news conference. Mittal eventually doubled its offer despite the Arcelor CEO's public posturing and acrimonious verbiage. Information about the case is available in *Negotiating Globally* (2007), and additional background information can be found in a series of reports of the events.

By the midpoint of a negotiation course, many students automatically initiate problem-solving negotiations and may expect that all negotiations can proceed in an interest-focused manner. The introduction of a tactical anger-based exercise at this stage of the course better simulates real world negotiations where emotions are likely to play a role and the parties may not all be versed in interests-based and problem-solving strategies. Unexpectedly facing an angry party forces recipients to not only manage their own emotional reaction but also to think strategically about what tactics to use to move forward. The recipients in the classroom will most likely be surprised by the anger and may react in a less than functional way (i.e., escalating the conflict with reciprocal but genuine anger or acceding to the other side's demands). The lesson for negotiators facing tactical anger is to learn how to manage effectively the power dynamic without escalating their own anger and having this negatively impact their negotiation behaviors. The lesson for the party instructed to use tactical anger is to see how the tactic negatively impacts integrative behaviors in a negotiation and to learn how to successfully de-escalate an emotional situation and turn the negotiation toward joint problem solving. The negotiators coached to act angry may have difficulty de-escalating their behaviors and turning toward interest-based communications because of the feeling of power they get from the reactions of the other party and genuine anger they may feel as a result of the other party's reactions toward them. It is best to implement the exercise prior to an introduction to the topic of genuine versus tactical anger in order to have the anger element be a surprise, and this maximizes the opportunity to evoke genuine emotional reactions by the recipients of anger. The case discussions, role play and videos are then useful for extending the discussion of anger, genuine and tactical, and applying the lessons learned from the exercise to other contexts.

When the instructor debriefs participants who became emotional during the negotiation exercise, it is useful to scrutinize those emotions and their causes. How did the expression of anger by one party impact each party's tactics and outcome? How does a negotiator know when someone is expressing genuine anger or using anger as a tactic? What tactics did students think were most and least effective in managing tactical anger and other emotions invoked by the situation? How were emotions of each party managed? The exercises and role play present a good opportunity to experiment with different tactics for de-escalating an emotional situation and saving face. In debriefing the exercises, the instructor may want to remind students that not everyone comes to the table seeking to create value; many negotiators view negotiations through the lens of

the fixed pie bias and seek to maximize their individual gains. Negotiators with a distributive orientation may use anger as a tactical source of power. However, anger may be reciprocated and the conflict escalated. The anger manipulation in the classroom is designed to recreate the strong genuine emotions that arise when trust is violated. Participants then must learn how to deal with the others' emotions as well as their own.

With these exercises, cases, and video, students can learn how to recognize and respond to both tactical and genuine anger. Students will see the effect that anger has on emotions, cognitions, and behavior and how these influence the relationship with the other side and the negotiated outcome. In addition, they will learn strategies for de-escalating anger using power, face saving, and interest-based negotiation that help them to turn the negotiation away from anger and toward a mutually satisfying resolution.

## Conclusion

Many negotiation texts only briefly touch upon the role of emotions in negotiation and few specifically discuss the use of anger as a tactic. The traditional view of emotions in negotiation has been to not become emotional in a negotiation because it interferes with rational negotiation strategies. Although theoretically valid to say that becoming emotional during a negotiation is a sign of weakness, the reality is that we often do become emotional, especially angry, when we feel attacked or unfairly treated. While there is some information on how to manage the genuine anger of the other party, there is scant information on how to manage the tactical use of anger. Students of negotiation should be taught how to recognize genuine versus tactical use of anger in a negotiation and how to react most effectively in either situation. Educating students to recognize and manage the complex dynamics between anger and the perception of power in a negotiation would greatly advance our practices in teaching negotiation skills and better prepare students for the realities of negotiation in real life situations.

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## Exhibit A

It may be useful to combine strategies when managing emotions evoked by tactical anger. For example, when encountering tactical anger, it is appropriate to call out the behavior, by stating in an authoritative voice and using assertive nonverbal cues, that the recipient will not continue to be subjected to their anger (e.g., “I will not have my team yelled at!”—standing up and looking down at the other party while slamming a hand on the table) and then allowing some measure of face saving such as a break with an invitation to reconvene at a later time (e.g., “Let’s take a break for 20 min and re-think the issues and see if we want the discussion to proceed. There may be a way we can both get what we want.”) The first part of the example clearly indicates that the recipient will not be put in a “one down position,” matching power with the tone of voice and intensity of nonverbal cues. Control over the process is gained by taking a break which also offers a face-saving opportunity for the angry negotiator to return to the table with a more integrative strategy which is cued by the positive communication about interests possibly being satisfied.

Recipients of tactical anger should show they have the capacity to be just as angry (e.g., by standing up and talking in a stern voice, etc.) but not actually lose control of their emotions. The recipient can then gain control by taking a break which will diffuse true emotions, breaking the energy and power of the other party’s assault. Students of negotiation can practice controlling their own emotions and learning when to take a break from the table to regain control over the process. A good method for wiping the other side’s unreasonable demands off the table is to negate the demand but offer a face-saving way to re-enter the conversation. For example, “Unfortunately, there is no



way that we can meet your request. Do you still want to talk?” As soon as the other speaks, the power has shifted because the negotiator now knows that he/she has something that the other side wants. Extreme offers and extreme personal behaviors must be dealt with the same way, with intensity, clarity of intent, and then face saving.

## Exhibit B

The goal of teaching anger as a tactic is not meant to recommend that students use it to gain strategic advantage but to understand their emotions when encountering an angry individual and to learn to develop a plan to manage their own emotions and the power dynamic in the relationship. Below are suggestions for teaching students of negotiation how to manage their emotions in a negotiation or conflict situation:

- Research the other party in order to anticipate the type of interaction (e.g., whether it is likely to be integrative or distributive) and role play with another person prior to engaging in what may be deemed an emotional negotiation. Practice may help recipients of an emotional outburst to manage their own responses to be strategic and not just reactive (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007).
- Intonation, facial expressions, and body language are important in conveying a message (Hall et al., 2005). Solicit feedback from others, both positive and negative, about how one comes across, especially under duress. Practice facial expressions in the mirror. Make sure facial expressions, gestures, posture, and other body language convey the intended message.
- Avoid unintentional use of language that can escalate the emotions in the situation (see Schroth et al., 2005). Be direct in giving messages so that misinterpretations will be minimal; visualize the conversation and practice responses. Consider the importance of face saving in language used to resolve the dispute (Brett et al., 2007).
- Be sure to understand how emotions are expressed or not expressed in the other party’s culture. According to Von Glinow, Shapiro, and Brett (2004), conflict management strategies need to be culturally sensitive. “Forcing” talk where it is not welcome to try to de-escalate tensions may actually escalate the conflict.
- Understand what behaviors by the other side tend to trigger one’s own emotions. Consider one’s own natural responses: Are they effective or ineffective? What may be a more functional response? Recognize when one is becoming emotional and have a plan of action for managing emotions.
- If one has an emotional outburst, apologize with sincerity (see Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002).

## Appendix A

### Important Confidential Note

Please start the negotiation with a display of anger and then use your skills to diffuse the situation later. You must display anger for a minimum of 10 min at the beginning

of the negotiation. If the other party appears accommodating to your demands or starts to make concessions, keep the pressure on and ask for more!

Try to make your anger as *realistic* as possible. For example, be sure to make large demands coupled with the use of communication irritators (i.e., telling the other side what to do, labeling their behavior negatively, such as using the labels “unfair” or “unreasonable,” making accusations of intentional violations, blaming, etc.). In addition, it can make the other side angry to dismiss or not acknowledge their arguments or interrupt them. To make your anger believable, allow for some initial introductions of team members or greetings before raising your voice and making demands of the other side. Avoid using profanity. The other team has not been given similar information. How they react is based entirely on their own personality/strategies.

Why do this? Not everyone comes to the table focused on creating value. Sometimes negotiators use anger as a tactic to gain power or lower the other side’s aspirations. The other party will most likely be surprised by your anger and may react in a less than functional way. The lesson for the other party is to learn how to manage an angry party without escalating their own feelings of anger and without making concessions (which encourages the angry party to continue their use of anger as a tactic). The lesson for you is to learn how to successfully de-escalate an emotional situation and turn the negotiation toward problem solving.

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