

# Better Communication

VERSION 1.0 2024

## **WHAT'S BIFF?**

Learn about this easy to remember tool

## **NEGOTIATION TACTICS FROM THE PROS**

How to listen deeply and get more

## **NON-ADVERSARIAL COMMUNICATION**

A framework for better results



## **BIFF (No, Not BFF!)**

Hostile comments can show up anywhere, including in emails, letters, on Facebook, comments to internet articles, and in-person. Should you ignore them? React in the same hostile tone? Or is there a better way? A BIFF Response® is a way to respond that usually puts a stop to the hostilities while leaving you feeling good about yourself. BIFF stands for brief, informative, friendly, and firm.

### **Brief**

Keep it short, typically a paragraph. This is even when the comment you're responding to goes on and on for many paragraphs or pages. This leaves much less for the other person to react to and is often sufficient to get your main point across.

[\*\*read more\*\*](#)



# Informative

Give some straight information, rather than emotions, opinions, defenses or arguments. You don't need to defend yourself when another person is being hostile. It's not about you. It's about their inability to manage their emotions and responses. Just stay focused on providing relevant information.

# Friendly

This may seem hard to do when you're being attacked in writing or verbally. But this avoids feeding the hostilities and may even calm an upset person. Just a friendly greeting and closing; nothing too involved. This helps keep the hostilities from escalating. It also shows that you have good self-restraint.

# Firm

This means that you end the conversation rather than feeding the hostilities. It doesn't mean harsh. Just avoid anything that opens the door to more hostile comments back. Say something that calmly ends the conversation. Sometimes, you will need a response from the other person, so just ask a question seeking a Yes or No answer by such-and-such time and/or date. Then end on a friendly note.





# Negotiation Tactics From The Pros

Negotiation begins with the simple premise that humans want to be accepted and understood. Choosing to be an active listener is the simplest, yet most effective concession we can make to get there. By being active listeners, we demonstrate empathy and show a sincere desire to better understand what the other side would possibly experience.

Negotiation isn't a battle; it is an act of discovery. The objective is to uncover as much information as is available. You need to understand what the other party actually needs and get them feeling safe enough to talk about what they really want. Negotiation begins with listening to the other party, validating their concerns and emotions, building trust and creating a safety net that allows for real conversations.



**Mirroring** works magic. Chris Voss says to repeat the last three words (or the critical one to three words) of what someone has just said because we fear what is different and find comfort in similarity. Using mirroring encourages the other party to empathize and bond with you, keep people talking, buy your party some time, and eventually reveal their strategy.

A study by psychologist Richard Wiseman on two groups of waiters concluded that the average tip of the waiters who mirrored was 70 percent more than of those who used positive reinforcement.

**Labeling** is another way of validating someone's emotion by acknowledging it. The first step to labeling is detecting the other party's emotional state. The trick to spotting feelings is to pay close attention to changes people undergo when they respond to external events. And more often than not, in a negotiation scenario, these external events are your words.

Once you've spotted an emotion you want to highlight, the next step is to label it aloud. Labels can be phrased as statements or questions. Labels almost always begin with the following phrases:

- "It seems like..."
- "It looks like..."
- "It sounds like..."



Great negotiators address those underlying emotions by labeling. Labeling negatives diffuse them, and labeling positives reinforce them. Labeling helps de-escalate situations because it acknowledges the other party's feelings rather than continuing to act them out. The golden rule is to understand that you're dealing with a human who wants to be appreciated and understood. Labels can help reinforce positive perceptions and dynamics.



## *Mirroring and labeling can help the other party feel heard*

### **DON'T BE AFRAID OF NO**

In a negotiation scenario, "No" provides a great opportunity for you and the other party to clarify what you really want by eliminating what you don't want.

#### **"No" can often mean:**

- I am not yet ready to agree;
- You make me feel uncomfortable;
- I don't understand;
- I can't afford it;
- I need more information;
- I'd prefer talking to someone else.

**learn more here** or **here**





# Non-Adversarial Communication Skills

Mindful, non-adversarial communication is one of the best tools we have found for diffusing high-conflict situations.

Start with an **observation**: What I observe (see, hear, remember, imagine, free from my evaluations) that does or does not contribute to my well-being:

"When I (see, hear) . . . "

State a **feeling**: How I feel (emotion or sensation rather than thought} in relation to what I observe:

"I feel . . . "



State a **need**: What I need or value (rather than a preference, or a specific action) that causes my feelings:

" ... because I need/value . . . "

Finish with a clear **request**: The concrete actions I would like taken:

"Would you be willing to ... ?":



***Remember :***  
***Observation, Feeling,***  
***Need, Request***

Here's an example of a statement that combines all 4 elements of NAC:

"It snowed over 20 inches last night (observation), and I'm feeling overwhelmed (feeling) and need help (need). Would you be willing to shovel the driveway (request)?"







# A Gentler Path Through Divorce:

**Get unstuck | Get closure | Deescalate  
Save money | Get on with your life**

If you would like to learn more about how to diffuse high conflict situations, divorce mediation, or how a divorce coach can help you move through your divorce with less money and less drama, book a free **Stress-Free Strategy** Session today!

Liz Merrill

Open Space Mediation

(970) 818-2209

Email: [liz@openspacemediation.com](mailto:liz@openspacemediation.com)

[www.openspacemediation.com](http://www.openspacemediation.com)

