

8. Encouraging fair play in negotiations

The following The Indian Model School steps will help staff to negotiate a satisfactory resolution for all parties in cases where some people aren't playing fair.

1: Respond, don't react

- Manage your emotions and buy time by using power breathing (as explained in guides 12 and 14)
- When confronted with accusations, attacks, threats or ultimatums, don't take the bait but let them pass.
- Don't let yourself become defensive. Remain flexible and open in your thinking.
- Instead of getting mad or even, focus on what you want to have happen.
- Make it possible for the other person to back down without feeling humiliated. For example, you could say, 'Well, it now looks like things aren't quite as they first seemed ...'.

Step 2: Step to one side

- If there is tension, try to disarm it by clearly appearing to listen.
- Agree with as much of what is being said as you feel genuinely able to do.
- Take a break, change location or seating arrangements in order to change the dynamic of a particular situation.
- Call for the meeting to end now and resume later, giving all parties the opportunity for reflection.

Step 3: Find options and move to the positive

- Rejecting the position of a person with a complaint usually only reinforces it. Instead, direct attention to meeting the needs of each party. For example, you could say, 'One view is that ... ; another view is that Both viewpoints have their merits. How can we work together to incorporate the best aspects of both views?'.
- Ask open-ended questions which increase the options and move to the positive. For example, 'What would be happening in ... class if things were working better?'.

Step 4: Identify unfair tactics

- Name the behaviour as a tactic. For example, 'Could calling the press about this be a way of indicating that you believe things could have been done differently?'.
- Explain how the tactics have made you feel. For example, 'I felt frustrated that we hadn't had the chance to consider all possible ways of dealing with this issue before the press put their interpretation on it.'.
- Address the motive for using the tactic. For example, 'Could it be that you hoped to embarrass the school into doing something different?'.

Step 5: Refocus on the issue

- Maintain the relationship and try to resolve the issue. For example, 'We are all obviously concerned for ...'s welfare'.
- Summarise what you believe to be the common ground and what has been agreed. For example, 'We have agreed that ...'.
- Divide the issue into parts. For example, 'We have discussed the issues around homework and they seem to relate to three areas:
 - firstly, there are differing views about the importance of homework
 - secondly, there is confusion over the amount of homework the teacher expects
 - thirdly, you don't know if you can help your daughter with her maths homework'.
- Address the less difficult issues first. For example, 'Let's start by talking about the school's homework policy'.
- Introduce some bargaining such as 'if you will, I will' agreements. For example, 'If you are able to send a note to the teacher each Friday with any questions you need answered about the week's homework, I'll ensure the teacher responds to you each Monday'.

- Try for agreement in principle. For example, 'We have agreed that homework is an important part of the learning program and we will continue to work together on addressing the details'.