

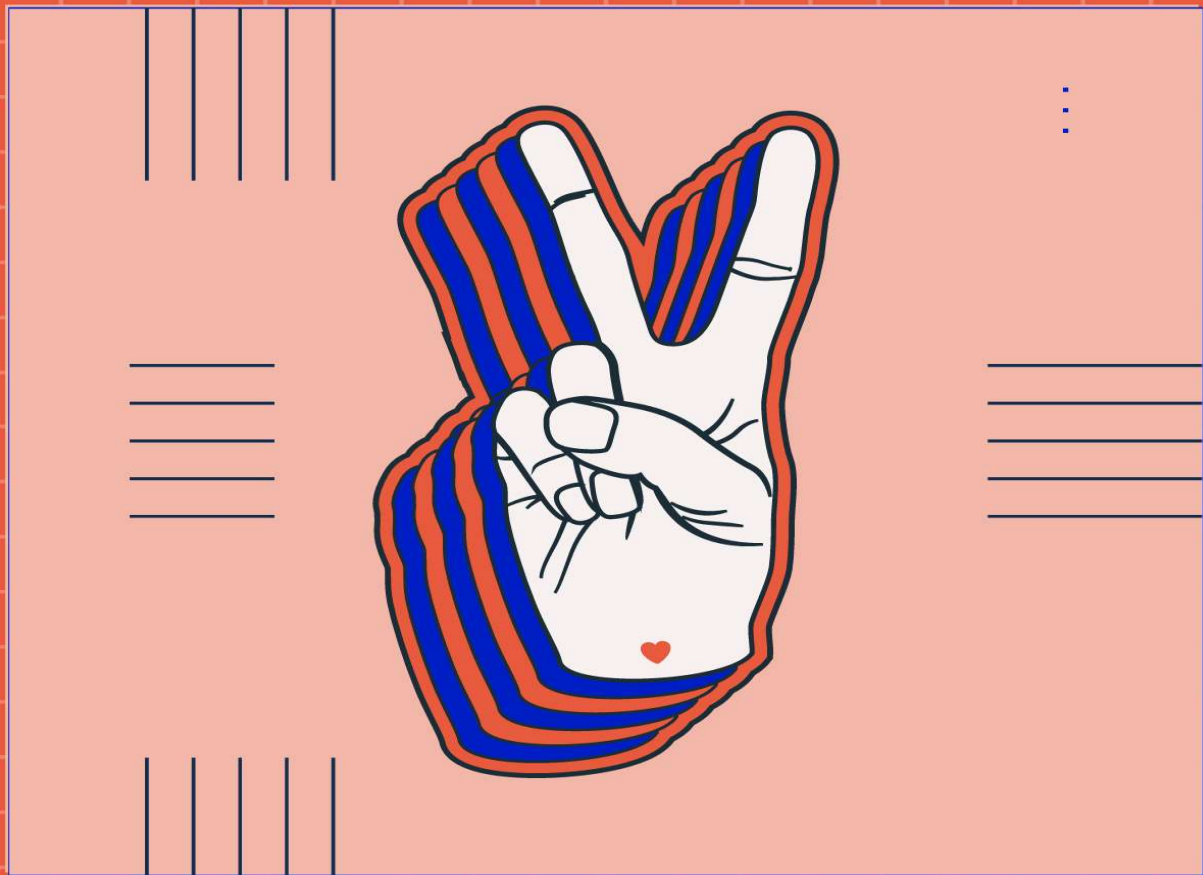
SUMMARY

GETTING TO

YES WITH

YOURSELF

WILLIAM URY



Summary of “Getting to Yes with Yourself” by William Ury

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Conflict resolution tips from a professional
negotiator.

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Introduction

Would you consider yourself to be a pacifist? Do you prefer to avoid conflict as much as possible? Many people would probably answer yes to both of these questions, but the fact remains that we will inevitably encounter some form of conflict at some point in our lives. Maybe you have to make a difficult personal decision and the conflict occurs within your own heart as you weigh your options. Or maybe you're in a stressful situation with another person and you're struggling to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. No matter what form the conflict takes, tense situations and tough decisions are inevitable. So, how can you deal with conflict? William Ury argues that all conflicts have one thing common: everyone ultimately hopes that they will "get to yes." So, over the course of this summary, we'll explore what "getting to yes" means and learn how you can get there.



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Don't Listen to Your Gut

Everybody has gut instincts. It's that feeling that stems from deep within our own hearts. It's primal and instinctive and it often governs our initial responses to stimuli. And in many cases, that "gut feeling" is portrayed as being true and right. Detective shows, for example, often heavily imply that we should follow our first instincts and go with what our gut tells us. (And if your gut is telling you that someone is a dangerous predator, then you should definitely follow that instinct and report them to the police!) But outside the context of *Law & Order: SVU*, the author observes that our gut can often be wrong. And, even more importantly, it can get us into big trouble. That's because we often lead with our gut when we encounter stressful or upsetting situations.

For example, let's consider my daily trip to Dunkin Donuts. I go to my local Dunkin Donuts every single day and every single day, I wait in line for an average of 30 minutes. This is entirely due to poor management and it has nothing to do with the amount of cars that are in the line; whether there are two cars or twenty, we're all stuck waiting for at least 30 minutes every time. And to top it all off, my coffee is usually incorrectly made! Now, if you waited 30 minutes to get a coffee that wasn't what you ordered, you'd probably be pretty frustrated too! You'd probably want to snap at the employee behind the counter and give them a piece of your mind. (And you might feel pretty justified in doing so!)

That's your gut instinct talking. Your gut instinct says that you're upset and you have the right to tell the world about it! But the author observes that acting on that gut instinct is actually counterproductive. To understand why, let's consider a different version of this scenario. Imagine that you really did yell at that Dunkin Donuts employee. Maybe you called them stupid and told them they were doing a terrible job and demanded a refund and a free coffee. Is that an understandable response, given your frustration? Sure. But is it the right response? Not really. For starters, that response isn't kind and it isn't treating other people as you would want to be treated. But even if you don't

care about being compassionate towards others, that response is also unhelpful because it's counterproductive. After all, if you yell at someone and call them stupid, they probably won't like you very much. And they certainly won't be motivated to help you get what you want. In fact, they might even feel so resentful that they might spit in your drink or make your coffee incorrectly again to pay you back for being rude to them.

Once you trigger that kind of response in another person, it doesn't matter if you're in the right or not. The author observes that once you foster that animosity, you've already lost the battle. And this remains true whether you're dealing with a botched coffee order or a romantic mishap. So, what can you do instead? One great step is to identify your real goal by using self-observation. Self-observation is basically just a fancy term for self-awareness. It involves taking a step back and detaching yourself from the emotions of the situation so that you can calm down and think about what to do next. Ask yourself what you're really feeling and what you really want out of the situation. Then calmly identify the steps you can take to make that desirable outcome happen.

In the hypothetical scenario about the coffee, your desired outcome is probably to receive the drink that you actually ordered and for it to be made correctly. So, even if it doesn't match your emotional state, the correct response in that situation is to calmly and politely inform the employee of their mistake and ask for your drink to be re-made. This is more likely to result in your desired outcome because most people are receptive to polite requests to fix something. As much as you might feel like berating them, remember that doing so is counterproductive. And that's why our first lesson in conflict resolution is to avoid counterproductive responses and always seek the most mutually beneficial solution.



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Don't Play the Blame Game

When you find yourself in an undesirable situation, do you ever try to pass the buck? Whether you do so intentionally or not, it's always easy to say that you "only did something because someone else did something worse" or insist that you're not responsible by virtue of extenuating circumstances. And if we return to our earlier hypothetical scenario about the Dunkin Donuts coffee, it's pretty easy to see who's responsible in that situation: it's the employee, right? After all, you didn't make the coffee incorrectly, and you didn't cause the line to be held up for thirty minutes. That was the stupid employee and their poor customer service! So, in that case, there's no doubt about it: Dunkin Donuts is at fault for how they treated you in that scenario.

But what if you get so frustrated about your morning coffee run that you treat other people badly as a result? Maybe you snap at your intern. Maybe you're rude to your wife. And when people call you on your behavior, you protest, "It's not my fault! I'm just in such a bad mood because of how they screwed up my coffee this morning!" In this case, there's no question either: Dunkin Donuts might have messed up your coffee, but you are 100% responsible for your actions through the rest of the day. And unfortunately for you, you can't blame your rudeness or your quick temper on a tough morning. Now, this might seem like an over-exaggerated example and maybe it is. But the sad truth is that when it comes to conflict, human beings often attempt to pass the buck and avoid responsibility for their actions.

The author observes that this is a pretty universal response; you see it everywhere from marital disputes to negotiations about world peace. And that's why our next lesson in conflict resolution is: stop playing the blame game. In the previous chapter, we mentioned that acting on your gut response (or your first negative emotion) is counterproductive and the same is true for blaming others. Although there are certainly many cases

where your frustration is justifiable, understandable, and genuinely caused by extenuating circumstances, it's important to remember that that isn't the case every time. In some cases, if you behave badly, it's just you being a jerk. And that's when it's important to take responsibility for your behavior and identify what you could have done differently. Taking responsibility is critical for a couple of reasons.

For starters, admitting that you were in the wrong puts you in a position to seek reconciliation with the other person. And in so doing, it also helps you to defuse the situation. As we saw in the previous chapter's example, getting angry and yelling at someone only makes them want to fight back. The same is true when you try to convince the other person that you're right or that it wasn't your fault. But when you genuinely say you're sorry and admit that what you did was wrong, the other person is more likely to calm down and be receptive to what you have to say. This enables you to work together to find a more positive solution. Obviously, this is a positive outcome when it comes to dealing with conflict. But taking responsibility for your actions can also have a positive impact on your own mental and emotional health. That's because taking responsibility forces you to shift your perspective and relinquish the victim mentality.

Whether you intend to do so or not, playing the blame game encourages you to embrace a victim mentality. Because when you convince yourself that nothing is your fault, you automatically start to focus on all the things that have gone wrong in your life or in your day. For example, if you snap at other people because you're upset about your unpleasant experience in the drive-through, it invites you to start dwelling on everything else that goes wrong for you. You might think, "I can't believe they messed up my coffee order! My coffee was so gross and then I was twenty minutes late to work and my boss yelled at me... Why does nothing ever go right for me! It's so unfair!" Once you allow your mind to go down that path, you start to feel angry and cheated. And from there, it's a short path to entitlement. When entitlement kicks in, you start to feel as though the world owes you something in compensation for all the crappy experiences you've had. You

also start to feel that your reactions are justified, no matter how you treat people. And when this is your mentality, you're unhappy and so is everyone around you! So, if you want to see successful conflict resolution, lose the victim mentality and look for ways that you can improve your circumstances!



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Always Give More Than You Take

When you think about conflict resolution, this might be a surprising piece of advice. After all, most people think that conflict resolution is all about scoring the biggest win for themselves. But the author observes that, actually, nothing could be further from the truth! In fact, the biggest wins of all occur when you set out to give the other person more than you aim to take for yourself. But how does that work? Why is conflict resolution improved by a self-sacrificing model? The author remarks that it works because this mentality taps into the timeless joy of giving. If you've ever volunteered your time or given up something to make someone else happy, then you've experienced that joy! From that experience, you know that giving to others is often more fulfilling than receiving something yourself. That feeling you get when you see someone's face light up is priceless. So is the satisfaction of knowing that someone else will be happier because of what you did. And, believe it or not, that applies to conflict resolution as well!

But that doesn't mean that you have to be a doormat; you don't have to let people take advantage of you just because it will make them happy. But it does mean that you should change the mindset with which you approach conflict. For example, instead of thinking, "What can I get out of this?" ask yourself what you can give to the other person. If it won't hurt you to concede something and doing so will bring them joy, then why not do it? Remember that your goal in conflict resolution is to find the most mutually beneficial solution, so giving is important! Because that's how you "get to yes." At the end of the day, "getting to yes" is simply a name for that moment when both parties feel like saying, "Yes! This is an outcome I'm happy with!" And compromise is how you get there.

Revamping your attitude will definitely lead to more successful negotiations, but it can also improve your reputation as well! The author has discovered this firsthand through his experience with various politicians and negotiators. And one thing he's noticed is that everybody wants to do business with the guy who gives more than he takes. In a world where

everybody is out to take as much as they can get, people find it refreshing to deal with someone who is genuine and kind. And they really appreciate people who don't try to step on the little guy as they climb the ladder! So, when people see that you're willing to compromise and be kind, they will develop a positive impression of you and be more receptive to negotiations. And the best part is that this holds true no matter what situation you're in!



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Final Summary

If we could choose, most of us would say that we would prefer a life without conflict. But the reality is that that will never happen, so we have to learn how to handle conflict with compassion and finesse. That's why the author provides some practical tips for "getting to yes" in any situation, whether you're negotiating world peace or having an argument with your child. But be warned-- these tips involve a radical shift in perspective and they are not for the faint of heart!

For starters, you have to train yourself to not go with your gut. Your knee-jerk reaction is sometimes wrong and rude and it can lead to a counterproductive output. Next, it's important to stop playing the blame game. Take responsibility for your actions and alter your perspective. And last but not least, practice giving more than you take! If you can be kind and strive for mutual satisfaction in all your interactions with others, your negotiations will be much happier and more successful!



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