

Lab Dynamics

Difficult conversations and interactions in the research workplace: *Fundamentals of negotiation.*

Exercises



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Exercise 1: The breakthrough paper.

Instructions 1

- Read the case study below

The Scenario

- Dr. First and Dr. Second are post-docs working on new methods to identify and isolate stem cells in the laboratory of Dr. Waffle, their adviser.
- The idea for the general approach they have been using came out of First's Ph.D. thesis work and First has been working on it as a postdoc in Waffle's lab for four years. While there were high expectations for this approach, the project basically ground to a halt due to a series of technical issues that seemed insurmountable. These challenges were so great that Waffle was thinking of abandoning the project.
- Dr. Second joined the project a year ago, with a background in
- neuroscience. Second has deep knowledge of neural cell development and in a matter of months devised a specific application of First's approach for neuronal stem cells. This approach appears to overcome the technical issues holding the project back and seems to have the potential to transform the entire field of stem cell identification and isolation.
- Despite the slow progress on this project First is planning to leave Waffle's lab in nine to twelve months.
- Excited about the new breakthrough, Waffle, tells them that they need to write up the results right away. Waffle says "Look, I'll be last author on the paper. You two know who contributed what to this work better than I do, so why don't you get together and decide who will be first author? I really don't care."
- First and Second each strongly wants to be first author. On leaving the meeting First says to Second "This is easy - it's pretty obvious you should be second author but we can put an asterisk next to your name saying we contributed equally." Second responds "That's baloney and you know it. Asterisks don't mean a thing. This project would be dead in the water if it weren't for me. You take the asterisk."
- They grudgingly decide to meet the following day to discuss the matter further.

Instructions 2

- In pairs decide who will be Dr First and who will be Dr. Second
- You have 10 minutes to decide who will be first author.
- Remember, your job is to convince the other person that your character is the one who should be first author.
- At the end of the negotiation write down three words or phrases describing what you felt during the negotiation in the space provided below.

What you felt during the negotiation:

Exercise 2: Your negotiations

Write two sentence description here:

What negotiation style did you use? (can be more than one):

Stop here

1. Your position
2. Their position
3. Your interest
4. Their interest
5. What you would have liked to achieve
6. What you would have been content with
7. What you could have lived with
8. Your BATNA

Exercise 3: Role play

Resume your roles of Dr First and Dr Second. Start with Dr First saying something that's a "stonewall" and mildly insulting to Dr Second.

Dr Second use as many of the tools that we just learned as you can in your response:

- Ignore stone walls or reinterpret as aspirations.
- Ignore attacks or reinterpret as attacks on the problem.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Focus on fairness and standards.
- Focus on objective criteria.

Then switch scripts and repeat.

Total time: 3 minutes each.

Exercise 4: Interests, problem solving questions and standards

Instructions: Read the case study below. In your breakout rooms and as a group answer the questions below.

The scenario: Dr. Eager is an Assistant Professor at Bigtime University. Last month Eager placed an order for 6 new monoclonal antibodies to be made by the University’s Monoclonal Core Laboratory and was told they would be ready in six months. Four weeks later Eager got an email from Dr. Milstein who heads the Core Facility saying that due to unanticipated problems in the facility’s renovation schedule Eager’s monoclonals would be delayed by four months. Eager has critical experiments scheduled with collaborators at other universities that might have to be cancelled if there is a four month delay. Eager schedules a meeting with Dr. Milstein.

	Problem solving questions person could ask	Criteria or standards person could ask about or refer to
Milstein		
Eager		

Exercise 5: Body Language

In pairs, quickly decide who will be “A” and who will be “B.”

“A” starts by telling “B” what they did for fun or enjoyment last weekend. While A is talking, B will exhibit positive body language.

Then A will tell B what they are going to do for fun or enjoyment next weekend. While they are talking, B will exhibit negative body language.

Then trade roles - B will be the talker and A will display the body language.

Time limit: 8 minutes for both.

Exercise 5: Role play, difficult people

In pairs, choose a role from the Dr First/Dr Second case.

Dr First: Say something in character and critical and/or judgmental to Dr Second.

Dr Second: Use the Agree, Empathize, Inquire or Assure tools (below) in your response.

1. Find something to **AGREE** with (It's hard to be angry with someone who is agreeing with you).
2. **EMPATHIZE** (let them know you understand what they're saying; use positive facial and body language, repeat some of their words- mirroring.)
3. **INQUIRE, ASSURE, APOLOGIZE** (clarify their issue, gather information; establish your commitment to the relationship.)

Then switch scripts - Dr Second say something critical and/or judgmental to Dr. Second, etc.

Time limit: 3 minutes each.

Difficult Conversations and interactions

Negotiation Guidelines I*

*Adapted from "Getting Past No" by William Ury, Bantam, 1993.

Keep in mind:

- The negotiators are problem solvers not competitors.
- The goal is a wise outcome not victory.
- Separate "people" from "problem." Be hard on the problem, soft on the person.
- Focus on interests not on positions.
- Invent options for mutual gain.
- Insist on objective criteria.
- Yield to principle not to pressure.

1. Before the negotiation: Prepare.

- Identify your and the other's interests. Think through options. Define standards to be used in reaching an agreement.
- Define what you would like to achieve.
- Define what you would be content with.
- Define what you could live with.
- Identify both parties' best alternative to a negotiated agreement.

2. During the negotiation: Manage your state of mind.

- When attacked, don't strike back, give in or break off the negotiation.
- Go to the balcony to gain perspective.
- Buy time to think; rephrase what's been said.

3. During the negotiation: Manage their state of mind. Identify with the other side.

- Acknowledge the other person's competence and authority.
- Paraphrase and ask for corrections to your understanding.
- Acknowledge their feelings.
- Agree whenever possible.
- Accumulate yeses.
- Express your views in a non-provocative manner.
- Say "yes, and...", not "yes, but..."
- Make "I" statements not "you" statements.

4. During the negotiation use clarification to identify underlying interests.

- Don't focus on their position, focus on common goals.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Ask "Why?", "Why not?", "What if?"
- Brainstorm to come up with a list of options without evaluating them.

5. During the negotiation deflect obstacles and negative tactics.

- Ask what they would do in your position.
- Focus on fairness and standards and on objective criteria as a way of evaluating an agreement.
- Ignore or re-interpret stone walls.
- Reinterpret stone walls as aspirations.
- Ignore attacks to defuse them.
- Reinterpret attacks on you as attacks on the problem.

6. Getting close to agreement: Help them accept a solution.

- Work to make the solution theirs not yours –ask for and build on their ideas.
- Make agreements contingent on mutually agreed upon standards.
- Help them save face if necessary.
- Discuss what will happen if you don't reach an agreement. Review consequences, never threaten.
- Remind them of your "best alternative" if necessary.

7. Ensure a lasting agreement.

- Discuss how the agreement will be implemented.
- Build in dispute resolution and re-evaluation if appropriate.

- Aim for mutual satisfaction, not victory.
- Help them save face if necessary.

Difficult conversations and interactions Negotiation Guidelines 2

Managing yourself during a negotiation

- When you feel like striking back:
suspend reaction
- When you feel like talking back: *listen*
- When you feel like telling the other the answers: *ask questions*
- When you feel like pushing forward with your own way: *work to bridge differences*
- *Learn something from every negotiation*

Dealing with difficult people

- Agree
- Empathize
- Inquire

Negotiation body language

Things to do:

- Relaxed posture
- Eye Contact
- Moving shoulders towards other person
- Relaxed gestures towards other person.
- Facing square towards other person
- Positive nod of head.
- Interested facial expression.
- Rephrase or restate what they say.
- Avoid evaluation.
- Use the person's name

Things to avoid:

- Leaning back or away from other person.
- Picking lint off of pants or skirt.
- Lack of eye contact.
- Making hostile motions.

The Behavioral Rules

- *Always* expect that an attack or criticism of an idea will be interpreted or felt as an attack on the person.
Corollary: Expect that you will feel this way too.
- 95% of what others say or do in your presence has *nothing* to do with you.
Corollary: You shouldn't assume others are aware of this rule
- If you're thinking of saying something in rebuttal and you're anticipating how good it's going to make you feel:
DON'T SAY IT!

Reading List

1. **“Lab Dynamics: Management and Leadership Skills for Scientists”** (2018) Third Edition. Carl M. Cohen and Suzanne I. Cohen, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. A practical guide to improving interpersonal and management skills, written by a scientist and a psychologist for scientists.
2. **“How to Have Impossible Conversations”** (2019) Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay, Lifelong Books. An excellent book with tactics for having conversations in which fundamental beliefs are at stake.
3. **“At the Helm”** (2010) second edition. Cathy Barker. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. A “must have” reference book for all new lab leaders. Provides guidance for many of the day to day “nuts and bolts” activities including lab organization, policies culture that lab leaders must otherwise learn on their own through trial and error.
4. **“Making the right moves”** This is a free ebook published by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and based on a course they ran in 2002 and 2005. Like “At the Helm” it is focused largely on the practical aspects of setting up and running a lab, but contains lots of practical advice from seasoned lab leaders. Available here:
(<http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/moves.html>).
5. **“Getting Past No”** (2007) W. Ury, Bantam. This short paperback is probably the single most useful book written on the topic of negotiation in its broadest sense. There is a lot of information in here that leaders of science-focused groups will find helpful.
6. **“Leadership Without Easy Answers”** (1998) Ronald Heifetz, Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press. This is a brilliant study of what leaders do and why. It focuses on why people in leadership positions feel pressured to provide quick and easy answers to complex issues, and how to recognize and avoid this tendency. Introduces the important concept of “managing ambiguity.” Many useful lessons here for those who lead science groups.

7. **“Emotional Intelligence. Why it can matter more than IQ”** (2012) Daniel Goleman, Bantam. An excellent guide to this important topic. Illustrates what emotional intelligence is and argues persuasively for its importance in our daily lives and in our interactions with others.

8. **“Dealing with People You Can’t Stand”** Rick Brinkman and Rick Kirschner (2012) McGraw Hill, N.Y. Another approach to this topic. Builds on some of the themes developed in The Feeling Good Handbook and provides extended illustrations and examples.

9. **“Leading Geeks: How To Manage the People Who Deliver Technology”** Paul Glen (2007) Josey-Bass, San Francisco. This is a very insightful book about managing technical professionals. Although it gives the impression of having been written primarily for the manager with a non-technical background, it is full of insights and ideas that scientists will find enlightening.