NEVER SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

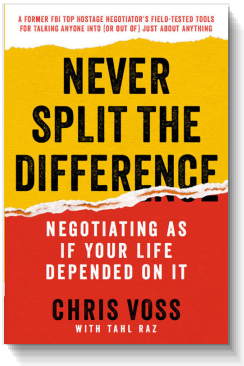
NEGOTIATING AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDED ON IT

CHRIS VOSS WITH TAHL RAZ

HarperBusiness (HarperCollins), 2016

"Negotiation as you'll learn it here is nothing more than communication with results."

The FBI's former lead international kidnapping negotiator swaps Harvard's rational problem solving for **Tactical Empathy**, *"listening as a martial art"*. Make the other side feel understood and in control, dig out what they really need, then bargain hard. And never meet in the middle.



2 BE A MIRROR

How to quickly establish rapport

Treat the talk as discovery: focus wholly on them and **slow it down**. Voice: calm, downward **late-night FM DJ** to make a point; **positive/playful** by default; **assertive** rarely, as it creates pushback.

THE MIRROR · 5 STEPS

Repeat their last three words (or the critical one to three); they reword and say more.

1	2	3	4	5
DJ voice	Start "I'm sorry . . ."	Mirror	Silence, 4+ sec	Repeat

A boss wants two paper copies of everything. *"I'm sorry, two copies?"* ... *"Anywhere?"* He settles for two digital backups: a week of work avoided.

3 DON'T FEEL THEIR PAIN, LABEL IT

How to create trust with tactical empathy

Empathy is not agreeing; it is seeing their view and saying it aloud.

1. **Spot** the feeling in their words, music and dance.
2. **Name it:** *It seems like... It sounds like... It looks like...* Never *I'm hearing*: the word I puts guards up.
3. **Go silent** and let the label work.

Label the **underlying** feeling, not the behaviour: labeled negatives lose power, labeled positives grow. Six hours through a Harlem door: *"It looks like you don't want to go back to jail."* All three came out.

THE ACCUSATION AUDIT

List every terrible thing they could say about you and **say it first**; denying it gives it credence. Cutting contractors from $2,000 to $500 a day: *"By the time we get off the phone, you're going to think I'm a lousy businessman."* Every one took the deal.

4 BEWARE "YES" – MASTER "NO"

How to make it safe to reveal the real stakes

Three yeses: **counterfeit** (an escape), **confirmation** (a reflex), **commitment** (action). Push for yes and people defend; a no makes them feel safe and in control, and often just means *not yet*. Then ask *"What about this doesn't work for you?"*

- *"Is now a bad time to talk?"* not *"Do you have a few minutes to talk?"*
- Ignored? Email *"Have you given up on this project?"*
- *No "No" means no go.* Walk away.

5 THE TWO WORDS: "THAT'S RIGHT"

How to gain the permission to persuade

Summarize their world so completely that the only reply is *That's right*: **paraphrase + label = summary**. Benjie summarized the *"world according to Abu Sabaya,"* and the $10 million demand vanished.

"YOU'RE RIGHT"	"THAT'S RIGHT"
a polite way to make you go away. Nothing changes.	they own the conclusion, so behaviour changes.

6 BEND THEIR REALITY

How to shape what is fair

Don't compromise: halfway between black and brown shoes is one of each. **Deadlines** are mostly self-imposed and flexible; reveal yours. Haiti's kidnappers wanted party money by Friday, so stalling cut the price.

THE F-WORD: "FAIR"

Hit with *"We just want what's fair"*? Don't concede; offer to fix wherever you were unfair. Told *"We've given you a fair offer"*? Mirror *"Fair?"* then label. Your own use: invite them to stop you any time they feel treated unfairly.

LOSS BEATS GAIN · 6 TOOLS

People risk more to avoid a loss, so show what they lose. **1** Anchor their emotions with an accusation audit. **2** Let them go first, most of the time (Chandler asked $150 a week; they had planned $750). **3** Quote a range. **4** Pivot to non-cash terms. **5** Use odd numbers. **6** Surprise with a gift. Haiti: $150,000 demanded, $4,751 paid.

7 CREATE THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

How to calibrate questions

Start with **What** or **How**. Avoid yes/no openers, and avoid **Why**: always an accusation, in any language. Asking for help makes them solve your problem.

- *"What about this is important to you?"*
- *"How can we solve this problem?"*
- *"What is the biggest challenge you face?"*
- *"How am I supposed to do that?"* An unpaid PR-firm owner asked it and was paid within 48 hours.

Bite your tongue. Attacked? Ask a calibrated question instead of counterattacking. One consultant lost her temper over a $7,000 bill and did not even get half.

8 GUARANTEE EXECUTION

How to spot liars and ensure follow-through

"Yes" is nothing without "How."

Ask *"How will we know we're on track?"* and *"How will we address things if we find we're off track?"* Distrust *You're right* and *I'll try*, which really means *"I plan to fail."* Ask how it affects people **behind the table**; deal killers often matter more than deal makers.

Rule of Three: get it agreed three times: commitment, summary, then a How on implementation.

FOUR NOS BEFORE "NO"

- *"How am I supposed to do that?"*
- *"Your offer is very generous, I'm sorry, that just doesn't work for me"*
- *"I'm sorry but I'm afraid I just can't do that."*
- *"I'm sorry, no"*, then, if needed, a calm **No**.

Tells: liars use more words and third-person pronouns; lots of *I, me, my* means little authority.

9 BARGAIN HARD

How to get your price

	ANALYST	ACCOMMODATOR	ASSERTIVE
TIME IS	preparation	relationship	money
SILENCE	time to think	anger	a cue to talk
GIVE THEM	data, no surprises	friendliness, then How questions	proof they were heard

Treat them the way they need to be treated. Let them anchor, then deflect (*"What are we trying to accomplish here?"*) or pivot to terms.

THE ACKERMAN MODEL



Set a target, open at 65%, raise in shrinking steps, and say no in different ways between them so they counter first. Mishary's rent, $2,000 asked: $1,730, $1,790, $1,810, then $1,829. Accepted.

10 FIND THE BLACK SWAN

Revealing the unknown unknowns

Each side holds at least three unknowns that would change everything. They give leverage: **positive** (what they want), **negative** (what they could lose; label it, don't threaten), **normative** (their own rules). Seems crazy? They are ill-informed, constrained or have other interests. Get face time.

USE IT MONDAY

- Fill a **One Sheet** before your next hard talk: written goal, summary, 3–5 labels, 3–5 calibrated questions, non-cash items.
- Send one no-oriented email to someone gone quiet.
- On a tense call: label, then four seconds of silence.
- Answer one unreasonable demand with a How question.
- Close every deal by agreeing how you will know it is on track.

READ WITH CARE

- A safety no is not an opening bid.
- Anchors, mislabels and umbrage rattle people; with long-term customers, *"Your reputation precedes you."*
- The evidence is mostly his own cases, and the book sells his firm. He stretches Mehrabian's 7-38-55 figures to lie spotting.
- Counts slip: four mirror steps are five; Ackerman's four are six.

HOW THIS PAGE WAS MADE. Read in full (chapters 1–10, appendix, notes) from the 2016 HarperCollins first-edition ebook of *Never Split the Difference*; every quote checked word for word against that text by script. Cover from the same ebook.

"NO DEAL IS BETTER THAN A BAD DEAL." CHRIS VOSS