



Stanford eCorner

Negotiation Lessons Learned from Kids

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Young explains how his children have taught him to be more creative with his negotiation methods. With kids, you have to navigate many times to reach a goal, he notes. He has also learned to recognize his best traits and those he needs to improve.



Transcript

What lessons of negotiation have you learned from your kids? That's interesting. Kids are fundamentally irrational until they're about five or six. This is from my own experience, so I'm not saying that's true for everybody else. I've noticed that I'm all about getting things accomplished and I want my kids to accomplish with me. "We're all doing this, guys." I get these irrational responses. I find myself going "No." I find myself rationalizing with them. "Look, this is how this works. We're going to do this." If we prepare and I give you guys warning and I let you know what's coming, we're all going to get this done. We're marching together. I'd even march with them.

March! March! March! I'd even make games with them. Inevitably, there's this irrational moment where everything just goes to heck, everything devolves. I'm like "No! We're going to do this." I continue to effectively try to rationalize with them. I think the best lesson is that we get caught in what our goal is. I have a goal. I have a thing I'm going to get accomplished. What I'm doing is I'm accomplishing and running right over them. You can obviously rationalize. In the end, it's the same thing. My kids teach me that you have to navigate many times - almost always - to get to the goal.

I've told the kids that I need to stop and navigate them or else I'm getting to the goal and it's very ineffective. It's a lesson for them and a very hollow victory for me. "Yeah, we got to the store! We got everything there but, boy, it was miserable." It's really taught me to be more creative. I'm very goal-oriented. If you give me a task, I'm like a horse to the barn, baby. We're gone. That's a great quality. As we talk about your holes in your life, your personality and other things, there's also the things you're great at. A lot of the times, the things that you're great at are sticking out of the backside too as a real negative part of yourself. I've really spent the last few years of my life recognizing that these are the things that I'm really good at, which means that there's something sticking out of the back which I need to chop off.

I'm really taking the time to figure out how to do that most effectively. That is, to me, the most mature thing that I can accomplish in my life - accentuating the good things, getting rid of the things I'm horrible at and trying to make sure I'm getting better at the stuff I'm mediocre at. Kids have a way of forcing you to slow everything down and figuring out a creative way to not make it about yourself. I like it to be about me. I'm just joking.