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Go To The Balcony

Sir Isaac Newton's third law of physics states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. If you push on anything, it pushes back on you. The bigger the push, the bigger the push back. This principle also applies to negotiations. If one party is made to feel threatened, disrespected, or generally pushed around, the natural tendency is to impulsively react. Part of your opponent's power derives from the ability to make you react on emotion and lose sight of your interests.

Instead of falling into the nonproductive cycle of action and reaction, you can regain your power by *not* reacting. Professor William Ury suggests the technique of "going to the balcony." When you find yourself facing a difficult negotiation, you need to step back, collect your wits, and see the situation objectively. Imagine yourself negotiating on a stage and then imagine yourself climbing onto a balcony overlooking the stage. The "balcony" is a mental metaphor for a mental attitude of detachment. From the balcony you can calmly evaluate the conflict almost as if you were a third party. You can think constructively and look for a way to resolve the problem.

Going to the balcony allows you to distance yourself from your natural impulses and emotions and stay focused on your goals. This technique can be used before the negotiation begins, in order to prepare, and as needed during the negotiation.