

The Yogi Negotiator

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Kristen LaBrosse, CAPM®, Co-Author

Take a calming deep breath and maintain focus on the matter at hand. Find your center and stay balanced, calm, and ready. Now, tell me, are you on a Yoga mat or in a boardroom preparing to negotiate? The reality is that the techniques learned in Yoga can be applied across a broad spectrum of areas, especially in stressful situations such as negotiating.

Yoga requires you to maintain a calm state of being while putting your body under stress. This same physical stress can arise when you are negotiating an important deal. When you learn how to find your inner Yogi in these times of distress, you will be a better negotiator and therefore develop better relationships with whom you are negotiating. Here are some specific ways that you can utilize your Yogi powers to become a better negotiator.

Know Thyself. OK, so you might be thinking—I know myself. I know what I like, what I dislike. I spend 24 hours 7 days a week with myself—how could I NOT know myself?

In Yoga, knowing yourself goes far deeper than what we typically think of as self-awareness. Yogis attest that many of us live with a personal case of “mistaken-identity.” We think that who we are is our job, what car we drive, our likes and dislikes, our education, our amazing sense of humor, and so forth. This type of surface awareness does not take us far when it comes to resolving conflict or solving problems, which are key skills needed to be a good negotiator.

You can tackle the task of getting to know yourself on a deeper level by pretending that you are getting to know a new person. The key is to not assume that you know everything there is to know about yourself. Within your subconscious there is an entire realm of “you” with certain tendencies, self-talk and life theories that you might not even be fully aware of. When you become better acquainted with yourself, you will not only be more self-sensitive, but you will be able to connect to other people better and in a more compassionate way.

Find Your Balance. Yoga practice aims for balance in the body, mind, and soul. For example, assertive is the balance between the aggressive and passive extremes. Deliberate action is the balance between fight or flight reactions. When we are balanced in life, we feel happy, at peace, and content.

When you are negotiating, you can feel the balance of power shifting in the room like a ping-pong ball. Negotiation is a delicate game of balance, where the best outcome is an equilibrium reached when both parties feel balanced and satisfied.

Because we live in the real world, this doesn't always happen easily. If you're in an unbalanced negotiation situation, where one party has more power than the other, the weaker party still has a chance to get what they want if they strive for balance.

In negotiations there is often real power (physical assets, knowledge capital) and perceived power (authoritative demeanor, quick wit). If you do find yourself at a disadvantage in comparison with the other party in one of these powers, work on increasing your power in the other area to arrive at a better-balanced negotiating situation.

Take a Deep Breath. One of the biggest ways you can lose your cool in a negotiations setting is by responding emotionally rather than objectively. We are all humans, and it is normal to have an emotional reaction, especially in a situation that has turned negative.

If the other party is evoking negative emotions from you by not "playing nice," remember your inner Yogi and take a deep breath. When you control the flow of your breathing, your heart rate is effectively slowed down, bringing your body and mind back to a calm place that allows a clear mind. This allows you to release all the adrenaline that the other party may have induced.

When you take a breath instead of automatically responding out of emotion, you regain rational thinking and take back control. Having control over your responses is so important for good negotiations—so don't forget to breathe!

Non-Reactive Presence and Deliberate Action. One important practice in Yoga is attaining the mindset of non-reactive presence. What this means is that you are present in the moment, and not reacting in an automatic way to external stimuli. Yogis strive to simply witness actions around them as well as the emotions that these actions evoke, rather than being subjected to these emotions. This separation allows for deliberate action rather than a reactionary response.

While it might sound all well and easy to remain non-reactive while reading this article, the real challenge is to remain non-reactive when you feel you've been personally attacked. This can happen many times in negotiations as people lash out to try to get what they want. When this happens, find your inner Yogi, the one that is compassionate and knows that others actions are not about you at all, and come back to your place of being present and calm where you can go forward with deliberate action.

So the next time you go into an important negotiation, leave your Yoga mat and towel at home, but bring along your inner Yogi to obtain a resolution that everyone is happy with. Also, don't forget to ask about Cheetah Learning's ***Masters Certificate in Negotiations*** (www.cheetahlearning.com, 888-659-2013) to become a Zen master at Negotiations. Thank you for reading, and Namaste!

About the Author:



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is an entrepreneurial powerhouse with a penchant for making success easy, fun, and fast. She is the founder of [Cheetah Learning](#), the [author](#) of the [Cheetah Success Series](#), and a prolific [blogger](#) whose mission is to bring Project Management to the masses.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 30,000 people have become “Cheetahs” using Cheetah Learning’s innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Recently honored by the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Cheetah Learning was named Professional Development Provider of the Year at the 2008 PMI® Global Congress. A dynamic keynote speaker and industry thought leader, Michelle was previously recognized by PMI as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the world.

Michelle’s articles have appeared in more than 100 publications and websites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#), is carried by over 400 publications, and her monthly newsletter goes out to more than 50,000 people.

She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School’s Owner President Manager’s (OPM) program and also holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton.