INTEREST VS POSITION

One of the key elements in any mediation or negotiation is separating *interests* from *positions*.

As Roger Fisher and William Ury state in their book *Getting to Yes*:

> **The basic problem in a negotiation lies not in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side's needs, desires, concerns, and fears."**



Unlike with positions, which lead to zero sum solutions, behind every interest there are usually many possible solutions. And in any conflict, there are usually several interests. This means that there are more opportunities for resolution when dealing with interests rather than positions!

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY OTHERS' INTERESTS? ASK INTEREST-BASED QUESTIONS LIKE:

- What concerns do you have about...?
- How did you feel about what happened...?
- How would you like to feel in the future?
- What kind of relationship do you want in the future?
- What about the process was a problem?
- What process would you like us to use to settle this issue?
- What is most important for you to achieve in the resolution of this issue?

Interests are not often explicit or well-communicated. Asking someone why they are taking a certain position or what is important to them can help unearth the interests underlying that position.

Remember: the most powerful interests are basic human needs like security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition, autonomy, respect, etc.

Adapted from: *Getting to Yes* (Fisher & Ury); *The Mediator's Toolkit* (O'Sullivan); *The Mediator's Handbook* (Beer & Packard)

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