

Self-Reflection Essay

Jennifer Fiala

Lower Columbia College

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Bart Finnel

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A self-reflection essay provides valuable insight into how a person thinks, behaves, and grows over time. A negotiations course teaches not only strategies for resolving disputes but also how to communicate more clearly, understand interests, and turn conflict into problem-solving opportunities (Fisher et al., 2011). Together, these two things have helped me look more honestly at my natural tendency to avoid conflict and to see negotiation as a skill I can practice in both my personal and professional life. The following essay details my learning journey throughout the negotiations course, discusses real-world applications of the course, acknowledges challenges and growth, and looks ahead at how the course has shaped my future goals.

My Learning Journey

At the beginning of this course, I saw negotiation as something more formal, occurring in business deals or legal situations, not as a daily process that shows up in family conversations, group projects, and workplace disagreements (Fisher et al., 2011). I believed that keeping the peace meant avoiding conflict, even if that meant staying quiet about my own preferences or needs. As the course progressed, I learned that this “soft” approach to negotiation can lead to unbalanced agreements, disappointment, and resentment over time because one person’s interests are not being addressed (Fisher et al., 2011).

Key concepts such as principled negotiation and the idea of being “soft on people, hard on the problem” helped to shift my perspective (Fisher et al., 2011). I began to understand that I could maintain relationships and still be honest about what I want or need. The 7C’s compass, clarity, communication, consistency, credibility, context, culture, and collaboration, gave me a practical framework to evaluate how I handle conflict and where I need to grow (Akhtar, 2018). I recognized that clarity is my biggest challenge, while communication, credibility, and

consistency are strengths I can lean on when conversations become difficult (Akhtar, 2018; Fisher et al., 2011). Having this awareness turned negotiation from something I was initially nervous about into a more intentional, learnable skill.

Real-World Applications

The lessons from this course apply to many parts of my life, starting with my personal relationships. At home, I often “go with the flow” to avoid conflict, which seems easier in the moment but often leaves me feeling unheard or even resentful. Through this course, I learned that avoiding conflict only makes things worse in the long run and may lead to resentment when my interests are not expressed or considered (Fisher et al., 2011). By using clarity and communication from the 7C’s, I now see that being honest about what I feel while being respectful actually gives relationships a chance to improve instead of deteriorate (Akhtar, 2018).

An example is planning a conversation with my youngest son about how much time he spends on his Xbox. Instead of just feeling frustrated and staying silent, I can prepare for the discussion by writing down what I am concerned about and what limits I would like to propose, which supports clarity (Akhtar, 2018). During the conversation, I can use “I” statements and active listening to help him feel heard, which reflects good communication and aligns with principled negotiation’s focus on understanding interests (Fisher et al., 2011). I can collaborate by asking what he thinks would be fair for both of us and brainstorming options together, rather than just imposing a rule (Akhtar, 2018).

Professionally, I can apply these lessons in my future roles. In those roles, I will need to clearly communicate expectations, address disagreements early, and guide teams through conflicts constructively (Fisher et al., 2011). By using the 7C’s as a compass, I can ensure I am being clear, maintaining credibility, and utilizing collaboration when things become challenging

(Akhtar, 2018). Principled negotiation will help me focus on interests, brainstorm options for mutual gain, and rely on fairness when I make decisions that affect others (Fisher et al., 2011).

Challenges and Growth

Knowing what I want and being clear in my actions is something I struggle with because I tend to avoid conflict. I have learned throughout this course that avoiding conflict only makes things worse in the long run and leads to resentment, broken trust, and agreements that do not work out for everyone (Fisher et al., 2011). Having this tendency reflects a “soft bargaining style, which is where a person concedes too quickly to not make waves, which feels safe in the short term, but is costly in the long term (Fisher et al., 2011).

Preparing for difficult conversations has been one of my main areas of growth. By writing down my concerns, identifying my interests, and practicing what I want to say, I feel better prepared, more confident, and clearer when the time comes to have a difficult discussion (Akhtar, 2018). I have also learned that pairing clarity with a respectful and appreciative tone when being direct helps me avoid coming across as aggressive, which reflects the principled negotiation style of being firm on the problem but gentle with the person (Fisher et al., 2011). This allows me to honor my own needs without abandoning my value of kindness.

Another important area of growth for me has been recognizing and using my existing strengths. This course has helped me to see that I already possess strong skills in communication, credibility, and consistency when I follow through with commitments and speak honestly, even when it is uncomfortable (Akhtar, 2018). Building on these strengths can help me develop into a negotiator others see as trustworthy and fair. I have also grown in awareness of context and culture by noticing how timing, emotions, and background can affect how a message is received, and I can adjust my tone and timing accordingly (Fisher et al., 2011).

Looking Ahead

The negotiation course has shaped my future goals in several ways. First, it has shown me that negotiation and conflict resolution are part of leadership, teamwork, and relationships (Fisher et al., 2011). Moving forward in both my personal and professional life, especially in roles that will involve leading others or coordinating projects, I will need to use these skills regularly. I want to be a leader who is clear about expectations, communicates openly, and handles conflict with confidence rather than avoidance (Akhtar, 2018; Fisher et al., 2011).

Second, this course has helped me identify specific areas where I want to continue growing. I plan to practice clarity in small, low-stakes situations, so that it becomes easier for me to speak up when the stakes are higher (Akhtar, 2018). I also want to continue strengthening my ability to read context and adapt my approach to different situations, paying particular attention to emotions, cultural differences, and power dynamics (Fisher et al., 2011). Finally, I hope to continue using the language and tools of principled negotiation, such as asking about interests, choosing options for mutual gain, and seeking fair standards to guide decision-making (Fisher et al., 2011).

I truly believe that continuing to use the 7C's as a compass will help me to become more confident, honest, and effective as a negotiator in my personal and professional life (Akhtar, 2018). Instead of viewing conflict through fear and avoidance, I am learning to see it as an opportunity to understand others better, clarify my own needs, and work together toward solutions that benefit all involved (Fisher et al., 2011).

Conclusion

This self-reflection has helped me to see how much my perspective on negotiation and conflict has changed throughout this course. I started by believing that avoiding conflict was the

best way to maintain relationships, but I have learned that by staying silent, the problem will only grow and will hurt trust and fairness over time (Fisher et al., 2011). Learning the 7C's and principled negotiation has provided me with the tools for approaching conflict with clarity, communication, and collaboration rather than fear (Akhtar, 2018; Fisher et al., 2011). By continuing to practice these skills, I am confident that I can be a more effective leader, negotiator, and friend.

References

- Akhtar, S. (2018). *The 7Cs compass for conflict resolution: A practical guide for real ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution)*. Independently Published.
- Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. New York: Penguin Books.