

you” shine though. The sidebar “Power Poses” on page 3 offers tips to help you feel more competent.

**3. Work on your style.** Though we judge others foremost on their warmth, we ourselves care more about seeming competent than warm. This can cause us to spend so much time honing our message that we forget to smooth out our

style, says Cuddy. That’s a problem, because how you communicate can have a bigger influence than what you say. Strive to connect with your

counterpart by listening closely to her needs. It’s likely to be a far more successful strategy than trying to impress her with your intelligence. ♥

### 3 takeaways on snap judgments

- 1 Stereotypes are dominated by assessments of warmth and competence.
- 2 We’re prone to viewing warmth and competence as negatively related.
- 3 We rely more on stereotypes when comparing two people side by side.

## Tony Blair’s 10 principles for conflict resolution

In his recent memoir, the former world leader shares lessons from the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Upon his election as prime minister of Great Britain in May 1997, Tony Blair made peace negotiations in Northern Ireland his first order of business, he recounts in his memoir, *A Journey: My Political Life* (Knopf, 2010). For centuries, Northern Ireland had been divided by a bloody conflict between mostly Protestant British Unionists who sought to keep the North part of the United Kingdom and the mostly Catholic Irish Republicans who wanted the North to unite with the Republic of Ireland. As the South of Ireland raced ahead of the North economically and culturally, Blair had come to view the conflict, known as the Troubles, as “ridiculously old-fashioned.”

Peace talks conducted over the next year culminated in a marathon four-day negotiating session in April 1998. After seesawing between agreement and impasse, the conflict’s major players signed on to the Belfast “Good Friday” Agreement, which called in part for the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and the creation of a power-sharing body known as the Northern Ireland Executive.

It took nine more years of careful negotiation before the Executive was

up and running. Blair walked away from the exhausting experience of brokering peace in Northern Ireland with a set of 10 core “principles of resolution,” outlined in *A Journey*, that he believes can be generally applied to all conflicts.

### 1. Agree on a common framework.

At the heart of the Troubles was a seemingly irreconcilable question, Blair writes: whether Northern Ireland should remain in the United Kingdom or join the Irish state by uniting with the South. Because they were fundamentally deadlocked on this issue, the task of the two sides instead was to agree on a framework for the discussion based on agreed-upon principles.

As the peace talks began, Blair promoted a “principle of consent” that would keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom unless the majority of Northern Ireland’s citizens voted for the unification of Ireland. The Irish Republicans would agree to abide by this principle only in exchange for power sharing—that is, they would put down their weapons in exchange for a Northern Ireland government that fairly represented both Catho-

lics and Protestants. The principle offered “a valid design concept” that all the parties accepted as a foundation for the difficult talks that followed, according to Blair.

This type of common framework not only serves to guide parties in conflict but also effectively “traps” them into behaving consistently, writes Blair. For instance, if parties have agreed on a policing program based on equal treatment, one side cannot argue persuasively that a paramilitary army is also needed.

### 2. Grip the conflict relentlessly.

Blair attributes the lasting success of the Good Friday Agreement to the negotiators’ viselike grip on implementation of the many issues under dispute. A resolution must be gripped and focused on “continually. Inexhaustibly. Relentlessly. Day by day by day by day,” writes Blair.

As an example, the agreement to decommission paramilitary weapons turned complicated during the implementation phase. To ensure that the weapons of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were indeed “put beyond use,” prominent international statesmen, including Nobel Peace Prize-winner Martti Ahtisaa-

ri (whose negotiation principles we covered in last month's issue), were taken around the Irish countryside to examine weapons dumps.

Each aspect of the Good Friday Agreement required and received this type of persistent focus, according to Blair. By contrast, he argues that the Middle East peace process has repeatedly failed because "no one has ever gripped it long enough or firmly enough."

### 3. Attend to minor matters.

Mediators of a conflict are often frustrated to hear disputants complaining about minor losses while overlooking their larger gains. But Blair advises against making such value judgments. Because seemingly petty issues typically are symbols of larger, critical issues, they deserve mediators' full attention.

During the Northern Ireland negotiations, for instance, Blair says he became familiar with the exact location of every single watchtower the British army used in the IRA borderland of South Armagh. The watchtowers, a surveillance tool of the British army, were a source of contention for the Republicans. Negotiating the removal of the towers

had to occur "bit by bit," says Blair.

"Such small things can be traded," writes Blair. The process of exchanging small concessions brings parties closer to agreement but can leave them "in a state of more or less permanent complaint." Inevitably, each side comes to believe it has moved the most. Third parties face the task of helping negotiators see the forest instead of the trees.

### 4. Be creative.

Ingenuity is needed "in abundant supply" to resolve tense conflicts, writes Blair. As an example, he describes how Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Ian Paisley tried to delay a March 2007 deadline for reconstituting the Northern Ireland Executive, a move vehemently opposed by Irish Republican party Sinn Féin's leader, Gerry Adams. With the agreement on the verge of collapse, Jonathan Powell, Blair's chief of staff, proposed that Paisley receive an extra two months in exchange for meeting face-to-face with Adams for the first time. Both sides accepted, and a historic meeting took place—though only after intensive negotiations about where the two sides would sit in the meeting room.

By adding the possibility of an unprecedented meeting to the discussion, Powell deflected attention from the contentious battle over a delay and opened a new opportunity for

**Blair had come to view the conflict, known as the Troubles, as "ridiculously old-fashioned."**

the parties to find common ground. Adding novel ideas and issues to the table is a powerful form of creativity.

### 5. Rely on third parties.

Left on their own, parties in conflict are unlikely to resolve their differences, writes Blair. Outside parties not only bring creativity to the negotiation but also help negotiators identify broader issues and turning points they might otherwise overlook.

As illustration, Blair describes how implementation of the Good Friday Agreement stalled in January 2005 after a man named Robert McCartney was stabbed to death outside a bar in Northern Ireland by members of the IRA. In the midst of the outcry that followed, Blair made a speech calling on the major players to demonstrate they

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were ready to move forward with “acts of completion.” Next, Blair urged Republican leaders to accept that the IRA was a roadblock to the power sharing they desired. Being one step removed from the conflict, third parties are best equipped to pinpoint such turning points and keep the process moving forward.

## 6. View resolution as a journey.

Because the two sides in a lingering dispute have difficulty seeing each other’s pain, conflict resolution is best viewed as a journey rather than an event, writes Blair. As a result, negotiations may need to include enough time for parties to air their grievances about the past. When the Northern Ireland talks began, Blair found that Martin McGuinness, the lead negotiator for Sinn Féin, needed to air his side’s pain and anger over past perceived injustices before he became ready to negotiate substantive issues.

Blair compares the peace process to “a car driving away from a crash.” The passengers, “shaken up,” constantly look back at the wreckage in the rearview mirror even while straining to see the road ahead. The

mediator is faced with persuading each side that the other party’s “faltering steps” reflect past trauma rather than a lack of good faith.

## 7. Prepare for disruption.

Mere months after the Good Friday Agreement was signed, the peace in Northern Ireland was shattered by the worst terrorist attack in the history of the Troubles. A bomb detonated in the market town of Omagh, killing 29 people.

All the parties to the conflict condemned the attacks and vowed they would not allow their agreement to be sabotaged. The “Real IRA,” the group responsible for the bombing, never recovered. “What could have been a turning back,” writes Blair, “was a turning point.”

By contrast, terrorist attacks in the Middle East too often cause governments to “clamp down,” says Blair, alienating peacemakers and terrorists alike. Rather than viewing violence as a desperate grab for power, negotiators interpret it as a sign of the futility of making peace.

Says Blair, even “perfectly respectable and democratic elements” are likely to accuse their parties of selling out when they reach agree-

ment. Wise negotiators redouble their efforts when hard-liners attempt to sabotage a negotiation.

## 8. Capitalize on leadership.

Over the course of a long conflict, parties inevitably develop partisan ideologies that color their view of everything that follows, according to Blair. Holding on to firmly established positions during peace negotiations is the easiest path to follow. But because the process requires political risks, leaders must let go of their established ideologies.

Fortunately for Blair, most of the major players in the Northern Ireland conflict had become so desperate for peace that they were willing to broaden their viewpoints. As an example, DUP leader Ian Paisley had a reputation as the “spoiler” of the Unionists for his resistance to accommodation over the years. During the peace process, however, Paisley emerged as his party’s lead negotiator and ended up working tirelessly to close the deal. Blair attributes Paisley’s evolution to two factors: a sense of impending mortality following a debilitating illness and a realization that the public wanted him to make peace.

**Bet you didn't know...** *Negotiation research you can use*

### When flexible work initiatives fail

**A** lack of women in the upper echelons of management has caused many organizations to try to address internal barriers to female advancement. In 2001, for example, one of the “Big Four” U.S. accounting firms launched an initiative to increase the number of women in senior positions and boost the firm’s reputation among women as the “employer of choice.” New programs included a female mentoring program and a flexible work initiative that allowed employees to put in fewer hours.

Researchers Martin Kornberger and Chris Carter of the University of Technology in Australia

and Anne Ross-Smith of Australia’s Macquarie University studied the initiative and found that it was not a success: the percentage of female directors at the accounting firm (which remained anonymous in the study) actually *decreased* from 25.57% in 2001 to 21% in 2008. Women tended to leave the firm after becoming managers and never advanced to the level of director.

Based on interviews with firm managers and directors, the researchers uncovered reasons for the initiative’s failure. First, because the flexibility program targeted women, it gave the impression that women need special accommodations men can

When strong leaders on all sides are willing to roll up their sleeves and cooperate, the odds of reaching agreement multiply exponentially.

### 9. Seize on external change.

If a conflict is deeply entrenched, negotiators can seize on powerful external forces to shake up the status quo. The economic and cultural boom that the South of Ireland began to enjoy in the 1980s offered a sharp contrast to the conflict in the North. Once, the South had been viewed as backward; by the mid-1990s, the North was.

No longer a “unifying symbol of Irish identity,” the dispute became “a painful and unwelcome reminder of Ireland’s past,” writes Blair. The desire to catch up with their southern neighbor became a powerful catalyst for the people of Northern Ireland to seek peace. Negotiators who are looking for an end to a protracted conflict would be wise to capitalize on such external shifts.

### 10. Never give up.

Beyond “gripping” the conflict, parties must refuse to accept defeat. If a problem cannot be solved in the present, Blair urges, manage it until it can be solved. “A peace process

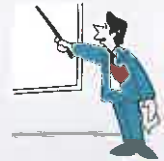
never stands still—it goes forward or back,” he writes.

On May 8, 2007, nine years after the Good Friday Agreement, Blair stood by, “a trifle dumbfounded,” as people who once had wanted to kill one another exchanged pleasant-

ries and were sworn in to the new Executive government of Northern Ireland, preparing to work side by side to solve shared problems. The remarkable achievement serves as a model to anyone who feels trapped in a seemingly unsolvable conflict. ♥

### Talking points

Tony Blair wasn’t the only mediator of the Northern Ireland conflict. Three years before Blair’s involvement, retired U.S. Senator George Mitchell took charge of peace talks in the region on behalf of the Clinton administration. Beginning in 1994, Mitchell helped lay the groundwork for a successful agreement by negotiating procedure, as he described to Program on Negotiation Managing Director Susan Hackley in the article “The Long, Hard Road to Peace” in the February 2004 issue of *Negotiation*.



In particular, Mitchell established the following process guidelines, which could prove useful to any parties in conflict:

- **Principles.** Parties were required to abide by the “Mitchell principles”—commitments to nonviolence, open communication, and democracy—as a precondition to negotiation.
- **Sufficient consensus.** Parties were allowed to vote against a section of a proposal while voting for passage of the entire package. This rule of “sufficient consensus” allowed them to save face with their constituencies without stalling the peace process.
- **A new format.** When emotions grew heated, Mitchell moved talks from a large, formal conference room to a smaller room where only two representatives of each group were allowed. Reporters and recording devices were forbidden. Away from the public eye, negotiators felt less pressure to toe the party line and more freedom to collaborate.

do without, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles. Second, employees’ performance continued to be judged by the number of client hours they billed. As a result, part-timers (mostly women) were viewed as less committed to the firm than those who worked traditional hours. Ultimately, the initiative rationalized the firm’s existing culture and marginalized employees who appeared to need extra help.

In spite of this, firm leaders viewed the initiative as a success because it received a national award, raised the firm’s reputation as an employer, and allowed the firm to offer a new product based on developing human capital. Though failing to achieve the primary goal of advancing women, the initiative enhanced the firm’s bottom line.

In an experiment led by professor Hannah Riley Bowles of the Harvard Kennedy School, participants penalized women, but not men, for initiating salary negotiations. Organizations seeking to reduce such gender discrimination should examine their informal culture, including the expectations, values, and beliefs that are shared among employees. Leaders should take steps to enable women and men alike to negotiate employment terms—including salary, promotions, and work schedules—without penalizing them for diverging from an outdated status quo.

Source: “Changing Domination in a Big Four Accounting Firm: Flexibility, Performance, and Client Service in Practice,” by Martin Kornberger, Chris Carter, and Anne Ross-Smith. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol. 35, 2010.