

# Interest-Based Negotiation: *The Walk in the Woods*

## Collaborative Problem Solving

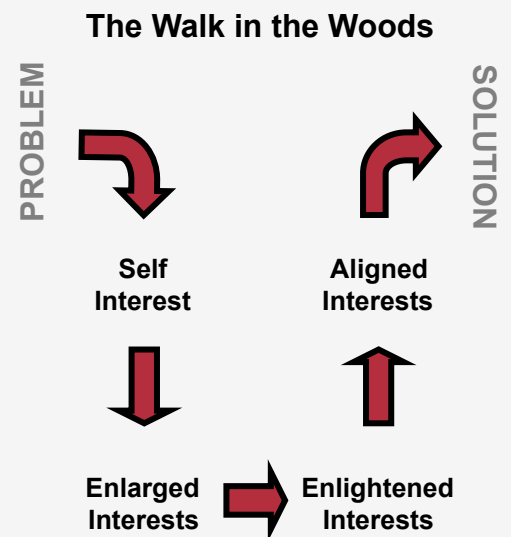
Building unity of effort among stakeholders requires active negotiation and at times, conflict resolution. *The Walk in the Woods* is a systematic, iterative guide to interest-based negotiation, designed to help parties better understand their shared problem, the diverse motivations of those involved, and unimagined options for moving forward.

The Walk in the Woods is named for a famous case of interest-based negotiation between the U.S. and Soviet Union during the cold war. The intent of the process is to develop solutions that account for differing stakeholder interests. Walk participants ultimately want the outcome to succeed because they work together to understand, discover, develop and agree to it. That shared experience generates collaborative buy-in, which is valuable when it comes time to execute the agreement.

## Conflict Resolution

The Walk is a four-step process for multi-dimensional problem solving, assessing interests from different angles. The accomplishment in each step prepares the stakeholders for what comes in the next. The method guides them in finding and agreeing to a mutually beneficial solution. The differences between stakeholders can at times turn into obstructive conflict. For leaders, this conflict can limit progress toward intended outcomes. Generating agreement is key in forging progress.

1. **Self Interests:** Each of the parties states their objectives, purposes, experiences, and fears in a safe environment that encourages fuller disclosure. Most important: those involved genuinely HEAR one another.
2. **Enlarged Interests:** Stakeholders list first what they agree upon and then what they disagree upon, most often finding that there is more agreement than disagreement. This reframes the understanding of the issues.
3. **Enlightened Interests:** With the problem reframed, stakeholders brainstorm creative solutions which had not previously pondered, opening a set of hopeful possibilities that further drives the negotiation process.
4. **Aligned Interests:** With a new set of options, the stakeholders negotiate toward mutually beneficial outcomes, articulating what they hope to *get* and what they are willing to *give* in exchange.



### Authors

Leonard J. Marcus, Ph.D.  
Barry C. Dorn, M.D., M.H.C.M.  
Eric J. McNulty, M.A.  
Joseph Henderson, M.P.A.



**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
Center for Public  
**LEADERSHIP**

National Preparedness Leadership Initiative  
<https://npli.sph.harvard.edu/>

Copyright © 2016 The President and  
Fellows of Harvard College