

**Negotiating for Success:  
A Law Enforcement Case Study with  
Universal Applicability in Human Services**

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**Abstract**

*The success of negotiations is contingent on many factors operating together. This is true regardless of type of bargaining or intervention undertaken. So, what are these factors? Here will be examined several that may have wide use. The focus here is specific and law enforcement related, but the possible human services applications are broad regardless of the reader's orientation.*

**Introduction**

On April 20, 1998, at 0335, negotiators were deployed to support an officer who was already talking with a person who was barricaded in his truck threatening to kill himself. Most of the issues seemed to revolve around family matters and husband / wife relational problems. The man's name was Steven and his wife's name was Betty. No one had been injured at this time.

At 0428, the primary negotiator began to speak directly with the person in the truck.

**This is What Actually Happened**

Below is a sampling of some of the actual responses that the negotiator / crisis intervener made to the barricaded person. Note the problem above and imagine, if you will, what the person in the truck may have said that evoked the following responses from the negotiator. What is the negotiator trying to convey under this very difficult situation? Is the negotiator consistent in his approach? How might you have responded if these responses were used appropriately with you during a trying event in your life or during any difficult negotiations? Where was the negotiator's focus? Inappropriately, where might the focus have been? :

- Will you come out? If I give you my word? Will you come out of the truck?
- I want you to be there for them.
- Show Betty that you are sincere and want to make things better.
- We'll work through it together and we'll get Betty involved. It will be better for you and your children.
- Give me an opportunity to help you.
- I know a lot about you because I spoke with Betty. (Negotiator related what he knew)

- I'm here because we (corrected) I don't want to see you get hurt.
- Will you promise me you will come out? (After he asked to hear her voice on the police radio)
- I'm not here to tell you what you want to hear. I'm here to help you.
- I can't help you until I know that I am safe and that you are safe.
- I want to help you.
- Give her another opportunity.
- I'm trying to give you some options. We can work together to try to work this out.
- Once I know you are safe, we can begin working out everything else.
- I told you she cares about you. Give her the opportunity to show you.
- As long as you keep trying, there is always the possibility that things can work out.
- I want to see you work out things with Betty and things get better.
- Will you give me the opportunity to help you?
- I'm only here to help you. I'm concerned about you and want to be sure you are okay.
- I'll do everything I can to get you and Betty to work things out. Give me the opportunity.
- It's getting late, kids are tired, you're tired, I'm tired.
- If you're serious about making your marriage work, that is what you need to do. (come out)
- Are you willing to work with me on that? If I give you my word?
- I can't do that right now. They won't let me.
- The problem is that you can't make things work from inside that truck.
- You've had problems in the past and you've always managed to work them out.
- Will you come out for me?
- Let's start to work this out.
- I can't hear you, Steven.
- I want to help you, but I can only do it when I know you are safe.
- This is what I want you to do, throw out the gun and come out.
- I know you want to do the right thing and that's the right thing to do. (throw gun out and come out)
- I give you my word I will let you hear her voice if you come out.

- You're doing the right thing by wanting to talk to someone and work things out.

Steven came out at 0609.

### **Why did this work?**

Most observers know that it did not work:

- a) Because all went perfectly;
- b) Because the methods that were used were somehow scientific;
- c) Because of "magic;" or
- d) Because of super-human skills.

All of this may have worked out the way that it did due to luck. This author's guess is, however, that luck, combined with the following, actually allowed success to be achieved and at least one life to be spared. It is suggested that the reader consider the application of relevant factors to their own setting. Some may be more obvious than others. Keep looking:

- ✓ Perseverance
- ✓ Procedures
- ✓ Voice quality
- ✓ Identifying with a human need rather than just the "wants."
- ✓ Reading the signs
- ✓ Team involvement
- ✓ Time passage, after starting to intervene
- ✓ Increasing pressure
- ✓ Calculating responses
- ✓ Winning attitude
- ✓ Going for a "win-win"
- ✓ Intelligence gathering and utilization
- ✓ Letting Steve know that his feelings were heard and understood
- ✓ Noting his investment in other parts of his life e.g. Family, kitten, mission
- ✓ Knowledge of Steve's psychological status
- ✓ Letting him know that he was not alone
- ✓ Persistence in not leaving until Steve was safe
- ✓ Care for the sufferer after he came out
- ✓ Making promises that could be kept

- ✓ Sowing seeds of doubt
- ✓ Accepting his concessions
- ✓ Taking his problems seriously
- ✓ Taking our (the negotiator and negotiation team) problems and personal needs seriously
- ✓ Caring for each member of the negotiations team
- ✓ Inner confidence that the negotiator could make it happen
- ✓ Good leadership
- ✓ Team-team cooperation
- ✓ Determination
- ✓ Wearing down the victim

And, maybe a little more luck.

### **Conclusion**

Remember: Good luck is usually the result of careful planning. And, that the above, perhaps with some modification, is useful in any type of negotiations, bargaining or crisis intervention where the stakes are high.

### **Suggested Related Resources**

Greenstone, J.L. (2005). *The elements of police hostage and crisis negotiations: Critical incidents and how to respond to them*. Binghamton, New York, The Haworth Press.

Greenstone, J.L. and Leviton, S.C.(2002). *The elements of crisis intervention: Crises and how to respond to them*, Second Edition. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks / Cole.

Leviton, S.C. and Greenstone, J.L.(1997). *Elements of mediation*. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks / Cole.

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Dr. Greenstone is the author of *The Elements of Police Hostage and Crisis Negotiations: Critical Incidents and How to Respond to Them*, The Haworth Press, Inc., 2005. ([www.HaworthPress.com](http://www.HaworthPress.com)). He is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations: An International Journal*. Dr. Greenstone has been a police officer, negotiator and mediator for more than 30 years.

Dr. Greenstone's newest book, *The Elements of Disaster Psychology: Managing Psychosocial Trauma* will be released by Charles C. Thomas Publishers in February 2008.